Narrativity and Organisation: An Investigation in Sensemaking Theory

by

Christiaan Hendrik Maasdorp

Dissertation presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Stellenbosch University

Supervisor: Prof. J. Kinghorn

April 2019

DECLARATION

By submitting this dissertation electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

Date: April 2019

Abstract

The dissertation argues that Karl E. Weick's organisational sensemaking theory lacks the resources to properly study organisational phenomena that requires interpretation and can benefit from aspects of philosophical hermeneutics. Whilst sensemaking is often depicted as a hermeneutical approach to organisations, the dissertation traces its theoretical roots and situates it in social psychology and interpretivist sociology. It is argued that Weick's distinction between sensemaking and interpretation is untenable from the perspective of philosophical hermeneutics and that it is based on a too narrow understanding of interpretation.

The operations of action- and belief-driven sensemaking, based on the metaphor of the framing of cues, are contrasted with the philosophical hermeneutic view of coming to an understanding as a negotiated event, captured in the metaphor of the fusion of horizons. A critical analysis of the role of stories as vocabularies of sensemaking that yield either cues or generates future frames in the form of plausible stories concludes that Weick's theorisation of narrative is too brief to offer a conception of narrativity that resonates with his theory of organisational sensemaking.

The philosophy of Paul Ricoeur provides better theorisation about the role of narrative in structuring experience. It is argued that narratives, conceived in the way Ricoeur does, offer a stronger and richer concept than the cue-frame-relation triad of sensemaking theory since it not only opens up proposed worlds, but also connects the past and the present. Therefore

narrative should be regarded as more than mere content for sensemaking, and instead should be considered a constitutive element for the sensemaking process alongside the notion of enactment.

The prospects for incorporating aspects from hermeneutic theories of narrative into sensemaking theory is investigated in the context of the problem area of organisational identity. It is argued that organisational identity is a problem requiring both interpretation and action. Weick's view of identity construction and Ricoeur's view of narrative identity offer two ways into this field. Finally Weick's emphasis on enactment and Ricoeur's emphasis on narrative continuity are integrated in a restatement of the model of organisational sensemaking processes based more fully on the perspective of philosophical hermeneutics.

Abstrak

Die proefskrif argumenteer dat Karl E. Weick se organisatoriese singewingsteorie nie organisatoriese verskynsels, wat interpretasie benodig, behoorlik kan bestudeer nie, omdat die nodige teoretiese bronne vir hierdie taak ontbreek, en dat aspekte van die filosofiese hermeneutiek van hulp kan wees in die verband. Alhoewel singewing dikwels as 'n hermeneutiese benadering tot organisasies voorgestel word, speur die proefskrif die teoretiese wortels van singewingsteorie na en demonstreer dat dit beter tuis hoort in sosiale sielkunde en interpretatiewe sosiologie. Vanuit die perspektief van filosofiese hermeneutiek word daar geargumenteer dat Weick se onderskeid tussen singewing en interpretasie onhoudbaar is en dat dit gebaseer is op 'n te eng begrip van interpretasie.

Die werking van aksie- en oortuigingsgedrewe singewing, gebaseer op die metafoor van die omraming van stimuli, word vergelyk met die filosofiese hermeneutiese siening van betekenis gebaseer op die metafoor van die versmelting van horisonne. Deur 'n kritiese analise van die rol van stories in organisatoriese singewing, waar stories of stimuli verskaf of verwysingsraamwerke lewer in die vorm van geloofwaardige stories, word bevind dat Weick se teoretisering van narratief te lig is om 'n begrip van narratiwiteit te bied wat resoneer met sy teorie van organisatoriese singewing.

Die filosofie van Paul Ricoeur bied ryker teoretisering van die rol van narratief in die strukturering van ervaring. Daar word geargumenteer dat narratiewe, beskou in die lig van Ricoeur se filosofie, 'n sterker en ryker

konsep bied as die stimuli-raamwerk-relasie konsepte van singewingsteorie, omdat dit nie net voorgestelde wêrelde open nie, maar ook die verlede en die hede verbind. Daarom moet narratief beskou word as meer as bloot inhoud vir die singewingsproses en eerder gesien word as 'n konstitutiewe element vir die singewingsproses naas die idee van verordenende aksie.

Die vooruitsigte vir die integrasie van aspekte van hermeneutiese teorieë van narratief in singewingsteorie word ondersoek in die konteks van organisatoriese identiteit. Daar word aangevoer dat organisatoriese identiteit 'n probleem is wat beide interpretasie en aksie vereis. Weick se siening van identiteitskonstruksie en Ricoeur se siening van narratiewe identiteit bied twee maniere om die problematiek aan te spreek. Ten slotte word Weick se klem op verordenende aksie en Ricoeur se klem op verhalende kontinuiteit deur narratief geïntegreer in 'n herformulering van die model van organisatoriese singewingsprosesse gebaseer op die beginsels en perspektief van filosofiese hermeneutiek.

Dedications

This thesis is dedicated to Johann and Esmé Kinghorn.

Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Aim

In the realm of competing scientific paradigms, it takes a visionary to glimpse a new way forward, but sometimes the questions raised by that vision cannot be adequately addressed by the one who pointed the way, because of the constraints imposed by his own historical context. Karl E. Weick is such a visionary, whose criticism of mainstream organisation theory and research is influential, but his approach—organisational sensemaking—didn't significantly settle the organisational research landscape. This dissertation argues that his intuition gave him deep insight in the phenomenon of organisation and the activity of organising and led him to ask the right questions, but his own theoretical antecedents lacked the conceptual resources required for fully integrated answers to these questions and prevented him from following his intuition through to its logical conclusion. In short, it is argued that Weick's organisational sensemaking would have been better integrated, and mounted a stronger challenge to mainstream organisation theory, had it incorporated aspects of philosophical hermeneutics.[1] As required by this take on organisational sensemaking, the aim of this dissertation is to firstly correctly position Weick's theory as interpretivist rather

[1] I work here with a well-established distinction between classical hermeneutics and philosophical hermeneutics. This distinction will be unpacked properly in chapter 3, because it is crucial for the later analysis of Weick's theory in section 4.3.

than hermeneutical as claimed by some (Langenberg and Wesseling 2016) and secondly consider the extent to which the sensemaking process can be approached by starting from a different theoretical base—philosophical hermeneutics—that is better equipped for the central concerns of Weick's vision than its current theoretical underpinnings in social psychology.

Whilst there have been attempts to create a hermeneutics of organisations (Barrett, Powley, and Pearce 2011; Phillips and Brown 1993), these are considered more marginal to the field of organisation inquiry than organisational sensemaking theory, which is comparatively well-embedded in the area of organisational behaviour. Consequently, it is not a question of demonstrating that philosophical hermeneutics is better than organisational sensemaking for understanding how individuals coordinate and organise in the context of multiple interpreted realities. Instead the task is first to show that, when Weick developed his organisational sensemaking theory, a particular version of hermeneutics already contained the meta-theoretical resources required for central aspects of that theory; second, to demonstrate that these hermeneutic resources can, with some adjustments, be fruitfully incorporated in a theory of organisational sensemaking that promises to better address organisational issues of a particular kind. Since philosophical hermeneutics is focused broadly on the phenomenon of understanding instead of the problem of organising, certain aspects of organisational sensemaking will help focus the relevant aspects of hermeneutics on the activity of organising and its particular challenges.

However, this identified need for an elaboration of organisational sensemaking theory is predicated on several claims that have to be addressed before theory development can begin. These claims concern the position of organisational sensemaking in the landscape of organisation theory, the character and theoretical roots of organisational sensemaking theory, the nature of philosophical hermeneutics as a meta-theoretical position, and the relation of organisational sensemaking to hermeneutics.

1.2 Landscape of organisation theory

Mainstream organisation theory is dominated by perspectives based on population ecology, transaction costs, and institutionalism (Weick 2003, p. 188). These perspectives address the big questions around the phenomenon of modern organisation, amongst others questions like why organisations persist, why and how their forms change, what determines their size and distribution, and how they differentiate themselves from their environments? The transaction costs perspective investigates how the phenomenon of organisation serves to lower transaction costs by finding an optimal balance between intra and extra firm transactions (Williamson 1981) and thus limits the optimal size of organisations. Population ecology (Hannan and Freeman 1977) focuses on explaining the evolution of organisational forms and their distribution on the basis of environmental selection. Institutionalism represent the original theorisation of modern rational-legal organisational forms (Weber 1946). Neo-institutionalism, as the latest expression of Weber's vision, investigates reasons for the continuity and similarity of organisational forms with reference to mechanisms other than brute efficiency of form.

The transaction costs approach is an economic perspective on studying organisations. It takes transactions as the primary unit of analysis and focus the marginal transaction cost calculations that determine the boundaries of firms (Williamson 1981). It has its roots in the work of Coase (1937) who tried to determine why firms exists and why they have a particular size and scope. He observed that whilst the price mechanism is the coordination mechanism in the open market, coordination is achieved by management decisions inside firms. He thought this is so because the price mechanism has marketing costs associated to its use (Coase 1937, p. 389) and that firms exist to economise on these marketing costs—meaning that the price mechanism would not be used when it is more efficient to coordinate organisationally. However, firms are subject to transaction costs (for example large transactions demand research, require paper work, and may be subject to regulation) that rise with scale. For this reason some trans-

actions will be more efficiently coordinated outside the firm, either in the market or in another firm.

As a development of contingency theory, population ecology is the closest of the three dominant research traditions to the organic roots of the concept of organisation (Morgan 2006, p. 34). Contingency theory holds that the appropriate organisational form is contingent upon the characteristics of the environment, with stable environments conducive to bureaucracies and uncertain environments conducive to organic forms allowing the organisation to adapt to its environment. In contrast, population ecology has a more nuanced concept of adaptation based on the notion of natural selection (Morgan 2006, p. 59). Population ecology focuses on the mechanism of selection and ignores actions of decision-makers in organisations based on learning and attempting to adapt or respond to feedback from the environment, so the level of analysis of studies taking a population ecology approach is that of entire populations or species of organisations.

Institutionalism takes issue with the rationalist and naturalist assumptions of the other mainstream approaches to understanding organisations. It is critical of undue dependence on notions of rationality, utility maximisation, and information efficiency in the case of transaction costs and related approaches and of the naturalistic evolutionary assumptions of contingency theory and population ecology (Morgan et al. 2010, p. 16). Instead it focuses on the rules, norms and assumptions that constrain behaviour (Scott 2008). These rules, norms and assumptions are embedded as social institutions, for example the legal or political system, and these institutions matter for how we organise. Consider for example a foundational neo-institutional argument: Whereas Weber saw the efficiency of modern bureaucratic organisational forms as the primary driver of its institutionalisation, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) argue that the drivers of similarity of organisational form are coercive, mimetic, and normative. Organisations can be driven by the political influence and expectations of other organisations in their network and conform to legitimate themselves (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, p. 150), when the environment is uncertain or ambiguous they might mimic organisations they consider successful (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, p. 151), and

increased professionalisation of the workforce leads to standardisation that drives institutional homogeneity in the organisational field (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, p. 152).

There is of course considerable variety and differences in emphasis under the banner of (neo-)institutionalism; ranging from approaches anchored in a rational choice paradigm that is moderated by institutional pressures (March and Olsen 1984) to approaches emphasising normative (Immergut 1997), historical (Suddaby, Foster, and Mills 2014), and cognitive (Goldenstein, Händschke, and Walgenbach 2015) mechanisms of the institutionalising process. In so far as these approaches study the underlying formal and informal rules, norms and shared assumptions about what constitute proper behaviour, they assume a degree of social construction (Berger and Luckmann 1966) and it is this commitment that sets them apart from economic and evolutionary approaches. However, the field is divided about the relative importance of social construction[2] in the configuration of institutionalising mechanisms, with writers interested in bounded rationality or historical approaches rarely interested in social construction and writers interested in normativity or cognition heavily invested in social construction. From the viewpoint of neo-institutionalists, social construction is a process in service of the slow sedimentation of the rules and norms that constitute institutions. In fact, according to Selznick (1996, p. 274) the break between "old institutionalism" and the "new institutionalism" is best captured in a view of formal structure itself as a social construction subject to cultural legitimation. Various approaches rooted more substantially in constructionism and interpretivism challenged the "weak constructionism" of neo-institutionalism in favour of a "strong constructionism"[3] and other

[2]In deference to Berger and Luckmann, I use "social construction" too, although strictly speaking it is tautological since the construction of social reality cannot be a solitary process.

[3]Searle (1995) works with a distinction between "brute facts" (that exist independently) and "institutional facts" (that are constructed), this type of distinction is typical of a weak constructionist position, whilst a strong constructionist position would maintain that all facts are constructed. In general institutionalists are on the weaker end of this scale and are being challenged by people with a commitment to a stronger flavour of constructionism.

more radical challenges from critical theory and postmodernist perspectives make up the fringes of the organisation studies field.

1.3 Problem description

Weick (1995) tried to systematise and integrate various constructionist and interpretivist insights with his organisational sensemaking theory, centred around a shift in focus from organisation (noun) to organising (verb). Organisational sensemaking became the most influential constructionist perspective for studying organisations. At first glance, organisational sensemaking appears to be a particular theory within the neo-institutionalist perspective—one focused on the mechanism of organising, rather than the outcome of organisational form. However, Weick (2003) sees himself as a critic of neo-institutionalism and others (Jennings and Greenwood 2003, p. 195), whilst searching for commonalities between the perspectives, portray the neo-institutionalist perspective in opposition to organisational sensemaking theory.

Of course, neo-institutionalism is a broad perspective rather than an easily demarcated and fully integrated theory, whilst Weick offers a standalone theory of organising that is much easier to get a critical grip on. Whilst neo-institutionalists focus on how particular organisational forms become dominant[4] and the objectifying process that drives this, Weick focuses on the interplay between intersubjective and generic subjective[5] levels of organisational sensemaking (Weick 1995, pp. 70–72). Weick's openness to the moments where the institutionalising process is temporarily interrupted and partially dissolved so that actors can create new intersubjective sense before it ossifies is the main differentiator between organisational sensemaking and the empirical programme of mainstream neo-institutionalism. Put simply, Weick focuses on *enactment* by organisational actors whilst

[4]This is known as "structural isomorphism" and is the phenomenon that the institutional approach tries to explain.

[5]The movement from intersubjective to generic subjective sense is roughly equivalent to the process of "objectification" in the language of institutionalism, however in sensemaking the process is iterative rather than directional.

institutionalism focuses on the *sedimentation* of rationalisation.[6] In other words, in organisational sensemaking the process of enactment retains a central position that it is not accorded in institutionalism. This allows organisational sensemaking to focus on organisational actors and how their self-understanding shapes their mutual shaping of the process of organising. As will become clear in the description of organisational sensemaking in the following chapter, this emphasis on enactment breaks with institutionalism also in that it includes a "pre-rational" moment, since sensemaking is ongoing and often actors retrospectively rationalise what they have enacted, whilst mainstream neo-institutionalism moderates rationalist assumptions with the notion of "bounded rationality"(March and Olsen 1984).

However, I contend that Weick's theory is not internally consistent and lacks the theoretical resources to properly study organisational phenomena that require interpretation rather than explanation. I will argue that Weick's theoretical base relies too much on social psychology and interpretive sociology and too little on philosophical hermeneutics. Of course, the interpretive sociologists[7] that influenced Weick, were in turn influenced by hermeneutics and Weick also borrows insights from phenomenological philosophers[8] with a hermeneutic bent, but my later argument and various analyses will demonstrate that Weick's theory is based primarily on social constructionist assumptions rather than philosophical hermeneutics. The question is whether organisational sensemaking can be fruitfully augmented with insights from philosophical hermeneutics? This will require further analyses of philosophical hermeneutics and fresh theorisation.

[6]There is of course also sedimentation of sorts in the work of Weick, previous rounds of sense ossify at different levels in what Weick calls vocabularies of sense (Weick 1995, p. 107). These vocabularies serve as frames which help to select and interpret objects and events in future rounds of sensemaking.

[7]For instance, Berger and Luckmann (1966) and Schutz (1967).

[8]For instance Heidegger.

1.4 Contribution

A theoretical contribution has to offer an alternative to the theory it criticises and requires at least a proof of concept that shows the viability and promise of the proposed alternative. To make the argument above, it must be demonstrated that, as a result of its constructionist roots, organisational sensemaking theory is up against certain limits, that these limits can be removed or mitigated by including philosophical hermeneutics, and that an integration of organisational sensemaking and philosophical hermeneutics is not only desirable, but indeed possible given that some aspects of organisational sensemaking theory might be incommensurable with a hermeneutic point of departure.

The alternative offered is not a rejection of Weick's organisational sensemaking theory, but an adjustment based on the principles of philosophical hermeneutics. As chapter 2 will make clear, organisational sensemaking can be seen as a phenomenon in organisations,[9] a general social constructionist perspective on this phenomenon rooted in interpretive social science (unpacked in chapter 4), a middle-range theory[10] about the triggers for the phenomenon and a closer specification of the components of the perspective and how they relate, and lastly as a specific model[11] (based on the middle-range theory) of how organisational sensemaking happens in organisations. The dissertation proposes that the concept of enactment from the middle-range theory of sensemaking can be augmented with notions of interpretation and understanding informed by the perspective of philosophical hermeneutics rather than by interpretive conception from the social constructionist perspective that currently informs sensemaking theory in general and its preoccupation with the framing device borrowed from interpretive sociology in particular.[12] More concretely, the model offered

[9]This is the common, non-technical use of the term sensemaking to simply label the way people coordinate by mutual adjustment in social situations even though they do not share the same view of the situation or even the same goals.

[10]This is the theory that Weick (1995) offers in his book *Sensemaking in Organizations*.

[11]This is the model offered by Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2005).

[12]Specifically borrowed from Schutz and Luckmann (1974) and Goffman (1974).

by Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2005) of how organisational sensemaking processes unfold in organisations is updated to include narrative, not merely as content to be made sense of, but as a constitutive element in the model, alongside enactment.

1.5 Method

The first part of the dissertation is devoted to developing the problem and providing description, interpretation and critical analysis of Weick's theory of organisational sensemaking and the field of hermeneutics in general, and Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics in particular. The character of explanations of organisational phenomena based on organisational sensemaking theory is contrasted with the perspective of philosophical hermeneutics. In the case of sensemaking theory the analysis is guided by the question whether the frequent characterisation, by other organisational theorists[13], of organisational sensemaking theory as a hermeneutic perspective is justified. In turn, the description and analysis of hermeneutics establishes the distinction between hermeneutics as a technique and as a philosophical perspective, paving the way for the claim that depictions of organisational sensemaking theory as hermeneutic likely depends on a narrow understanding of hermeneutics as an interpretive technique. Further analysis of the principles and practice of philosophical hermeneutics (as found in the work of Gadamer and Ricoeur) provides a contrast between an organisational sensemaking approach and a philosophical hermeneutics perspective on how meaningful understanding or sense is reached. In particular the question is considered how the sensemaking act of framing of cues differs from dialogical model of reaching understanding in philosophical hermeneutics.

The second part of the dissertation proceeds with the matter of theory development in the context of a particular organisational research issue, namely the study of organisational identity. This has the advantage of limiting the scope of theorisation to one definite organisational problem, rather

[13]For example by Barrett, Powley, and Pearce (2011) and by Tomkins and Eatough (2017).

than trying to address organisation theory and the problem of organising as a whole, and provides a concrete context where the advantages of the proposed improvement can be judged against the original. This detour through the problem of organisational identity serves as an entry to highlight the narrow conception of understanding offered by sensemaking theory. The selected focus is on Weick's consideration of the role of stories as frames and connecting devices in his model of the organisational sensemaking process to demonstrate that his theorisation of narrative is deficient. By contrast, the philosophy of Ricoeur provides a far richer theorisation of narrative and its relation to history—showing the meaning-making (or world-making) function of narrative. The question considered is whether narrative, conceived from a philosophical hermeneutic perspective along the lines proposed by Ricoeur, provides an alternative to sensemaking theory's notion of framing of selected cues. The concluding section evaluates the prospects for integration of aspects of Ricoeur's theory of narrative to augment the deficient theorisation in Weick's sensemaking theory.

1.6 Scope of the inquiry

Organisational sensemaking theory has been developed over decades and been applied in various areas. Whilst this development process is subject to scrutiny and is important for assessing the theoretical underpinnings of the theory, the book, *Sensemaking in Organizations* (Weick 1995) is taken as the definitive statement of the mature theory, because this is where Weick declares his departure from 'mere interpretation'. However, the development of Weick's thought is described with reference to his influential book *The Social Psychology of Organizing* (Weick 1979)—focused on enactment theory and how organisations incorporate environmental change and enacted variation through cycles of selection, retention and feedback—and an early article, "Toward a model of organizations as interpretation systems" (Daft and Weick 1984), where the focus shifted towards organisational cognition. The later elaboration of his mature theory to focus on organising as opposed to organisation and his response to criticism is assumed

to be contained in "Organizing and the process of sensemaking" (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld 2005) and "Enacting an environment: The infrastructure of organizing" (Weick 2003).

Philosophical hermeneutics is an extremely large field with many rival exponents and whilst a general interpretive overview is provided of the field in general and its status in organisation studies in particular, the philosophy of Ricoeur, and in particular his later interest in narrative and identity, is the flavour of hermeneutics that permeates the eventual analysis of this dissertation. As background, the central ideas of hermeneutics and the central controversy of interest for this argument, namely whether hermeneutics is a technique or a departure point, are recounted in chapter 3.

Since organisation theory is such a wide field, it is hard to determine in abstract whether the criticism of Weick and further theoretical development to address his shortcomings constitute a contribution. For this reason a particular problem area in the field is demarcated where some organisational phenomena or practices can be theorised to serve as a demonstration of the limits of the existing theory and as a test of the feasibility of the theoretical development done to address those limits. The issue of organisational identity seems like a good choice of such a problem area, because identity is clearly an interpretive problem, identity construction is a foundational property of organisational sensemaking, and the concept of narrative identity is central to the philosophy of a prominent exponent of philosophical hermeneutics, namely Ricoeur. Furthermore the question of identity is one of great importance to organisations in general, because it touches on other central problems confronting organisation theory, for instance the problems of continuity amidst change, of coordination in a purposeful context, etc.

There are seven theoretical perspectives on organisational identity that dominate the literature on this topic: 1. outright rejection, 2. social identity theory (Annison and O'Connor 2002; Fiol, Pratt, and O'Connor 2009), 3. psychoanalytic (Driver 2009; Gabriel 2016; Islam 2014; Schwartz 1990), 4. Foucauldian (Brewis 2004; Knights and Willmott 1989; Lecoure and Mills 2008; Zuboff 1988), 5. symbolic interactionist (Gardner and Avolio 1998; Jones and Volpe 2011), 6. micro-interactionist (Llewellyn and Bur-

row 2007; Mcinnes and Corlett 2012), and 7. narrative perspectives (Czarniawska 2000; Pedersen 2008).

Disregarding the outright rejection of organisational identity as a phenomenon and psychoanalytic and Foucauldian perspectives, it can be argued that organisational sensemaking shares to varying degrees assumptions with all of the rest, in particular on symbolic and micro-interactionism. Whilst parts of organisational sensemaking uses narratives as "vocabularies of sequence and experience" (Weick 1995, pp. 127–131), narrative is not invoked when Weick unpacks how sensemaking is grounded in identity construction (Weick 1995, pp. 18–24). By contrast Ricoeur (1991b) offers a concept of narrative identity which partly inspired the narrative perspective on organisational identity found in organisation theory. However, the narrative perspective—for example the work of Czarniawska-Joerges (Czarniawska 1998; Czarniawska and Gagliardi 2003; Czarniawska 2004; Czarniawska 2007)—primarily uses narratives as material from which identity can be interpreted. The true import of Ricoeur's narrative identity concept was thus lost in the narrative perspective on organisational identity. As will be demonstrated later, in the philosophy of Ricoeur, narrative becomes an analogy for the nature of identity itself, rather than merely being the material from which identity can be read. Narrative identity for him is "the sort of identity to which a human being has access thanks to the mediation of the narrative function" (Ricoeur 1991b, p. 73).

Organisational identity is more fragile than both personal and cultural or national identities. On the one hand, organisations endure whilst its members are subject to turnover; on the other hand, organisational membership is not the same as the membership of a culture or a nation as it involves far more volition on the part of members. At the heart of the tension between identity and plurality lies differing conceptions of what organisations are. For sensemaking theory, the operative organisational identity depends on the context—the self invoked to make sense shifts with the context and it depends on the resources available in the context and the skills of the author whether the enacted construction is plausible or not. In contrast, narrative identity according to Ricoeur holds that iden-

tity is refigured at a particular point in time: it is not the selection of a particular version of the collective or one of the faces of a hybrid identity, it claims continuity whilst acknowledges changed circumstances and priorities. Ricoeur's narrative identity concept distinguishes between interacting *idem* and *ipse* identities[14] and this brings time and change into the identity equation (Ricoeur 1992, pp. 2–3). Identity as permanence over time is a configuration that has to be achieved over and over again—at certain times *idem* and *ipse* overlap fully, but at other times they do not and have to be integrated narratively. In summary, organisational identity seems to be a good site for exploring the limits of organisational sensemaking theory and the promise of a particular version of hermeneutics, because the views of Weick and Ricoeur proceed demonstrably from different assumptions about this issue and it is not obvious that they can be integrated in a meaningful manner for addressing the issue of organisational identity (and by extension other aspects of organisation).

1.7 Argument logic

We now turn to the various analyses that will make up the components of the argument that develops organisational sensemaking theory further with respect to organisational identity.

To establish that organisational sensemaking theory tends toward social constructionism rather than philosophical hermeneutics, two analyses are done. The first analysis, in section 3.5, aims to establish the difference between classical (or analytical) hermeneutics focused on the methods employed for interpretation (primarily of texts) and philosophical (or dialectical) hermeneutics focused on the phenomenon of understanding. The second analysis, in section 4.3, is focused on Weick's distinction between sensemaking and interpretation. With this distinction Weick seeks to establish interpretation as a subset of sensemaking and claims a privileged

[14]With this distinction Ricoeur (1992, pp. 140–141) highlights the difference between identity as sameness (*idem* identity or permanence over time) and selfhood (*ipse* identity or continuity). This distinction will be analysed more fully in section 5.5.2.

position for the role of action for enacting increasing sense into puzzling situations. It is argued that the interpretation that Weick juxtaposes with sensemaking is interpretation as understood in the classical hermeneutics sense and that from the viewpoint of philosophical hermeneutics the juxtaposition would be hard to maintain.

Three analyses, in section 4.4, address the question whether Weick's sensemaking theory is not just philosophical hermeneutics under a different label. The first takes stock of Weick's major influences and the aspects of organisational sensemaking theory each of these inspired. The second considers specifically the traces of philosophical hermeneutics found in organisational sensemaking theory via interpretive sociology (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Schutz 1967) and ethnomethodology (Garfinkel 1967), as well as the references to Heidegger via other writers (Weick 1995, pp. 43, 90). The third considers the four ways the theory explains how people impose sense on ongoing flows, namely arguing, expecting, committing, and manipulating (Weick 1995, pp. 133–169). Together these three analyses shows that, although philosophical hermeneutics no doubt inspired Weick, ideas emanating from micro-interactionist, social constructionist, and social psychological considerations are far more influential in the actual operation of organisational sensemaking theory.

The problem area of organisational identity is described in an overview of the seven dominant theoretical positions that are found in the literature in section 5.3. In order to compare Weickean and Ricoeurian approaches to identity against the background of the current state of the literature, the following analyses are undertaken: Weick's account of identity construction is unpacked in section 5.4, first with an emphasis on identity and then with a focus on its construction. Points of contrast and agreement with social identity theory, symbolic interactionist, and micro-interactionist approaches to identity are reviewed and the centrality of Weick's concept of enactment for his account of identity is highlighted. The role of narrative as a vocabulary of sequence and experience in service of organisational sensemaking is described in section 5.1.2, and Ricoeur's concept of narrative identity is explained in section 5.5.2. To show that Ricoeur's concept of narrative

identity has been watered down significantly, a few major contributions (Aaltio-Marjosola 1994; Boje 1991; Brown, Humphreys, and Gurney 2005; Czarniawska 2000; Czarniawska and Gagliardi 2003; Somers 1994) taking a narrative approach to organisational identity are presented and analysed against the background of Ricoeur's hermeneutic project (in section 5.3.6). The reasons for this watering down are considered in section 5.6 listing the major objections to the use of narrative identity as a collective identity construct. It is argued that Ricoeur uses the concept of narrative identity primarily in service of ethics and thus at the individual (personal) or universal (national or cultural) level. The question is therefore whether narrative identity—used in the way Ricoeur uses it—can be fruitfully applied to the problem of organisational identity?

After these analyses, Weick's emphasis on action (enactment) and Ricoeur's emphasis on fluid continuity (narrative identity) are partially integrated in a restatement of the organisational sensemaking process based more fully on the perspective of philosophical hermeneutics on the role of narrative in experience. The integration is partial, because some elements in Weick's original theory are incommensurable with Ricoeur's departure point in philosophical hermeneutics.

1.8 Outline

The order of presentation of the above analyses takes place in two parts, the one critical-theoretical and the other applied to the problem of organisational identity.

The critical-theoretical part starts off with a description of organisational sensemaking theory in chapter 2, its theoretical and operational elements, the challenge it poses to mainstream organisation theory, and its current status and influence on the field. Next, in chapter 3, we turn to hermeneutics as a meta-theoretical approach, the distinction between analytic and dialectic hermeneutics, the role of Ricoeur as integrator, and the status of hermeneutics in organisational inquiry.[15] Thereafter, in chapter

[15]Organisational inquiry refers to the various labels under which the problems of

4, we consider Weick's hermeneutic influences, the hermeneutic moments in the process of organisational sensemaking, and Weick's distinction between sensemaking and interpretation. This concludes the first section.

In the applied part, we turn (in chapter 5) to the particular problem of organisational identity, give an overview of the research field of organisational identity, and the various theoretical positions currently fashionable. Next, we consider the role of identity construction in organisational sensemaking, the role of enactment in identity work, and various organisational sensemaking approaches to the problem of organisational identity, concluding with the centrality of enactment for Weick's account of identity. Thereafter, Ricoeur's concept of narrative identity and the relation of narrative identity approaches to organisational identity is described and the prospects for a conception of organisational identity based on Ricoeur's notion of narrative identity is considered.

In the concluding chapter 6 it is argued that organisational identity is a problem requiring both interpretation and action, the prospects for and limits of Weick and Ricoeur's views are weighed up. Lastly it is argued that the ecological change-enactment-selection-retention model of sensemaking processes that is at the heart of sensemaking theory can be better conceived of as the interplay between enactment and narrative.

---

organisation and organising are studied such as organisation theory, organisational behaviour, organisation science, and organisation studies.

Chapter 2

Organisational Sensemaking

2.1 Background

2.1.1 Organising as a problem

The phenomenon organisation and the activity of organising were originally seen as a technical problem of design and efficiency of coordination respectively. These are the assumptions of the scientific management paradigm (Morgan 1980, pp. 22–26) where organisations were designed like machines and the division of labour, standardisation of equipment, training, and monitoring of workers aimed to coordinate individual efforts as efficiently as possible. Over time organisation theorists moved from these purely technical concerns towards more social and human-centred approaches to organising (Morgan 1980, p. 613). Meindl, Stubbart, and Porac (1996, pp. ix–x) argue that developments in cognitive science, which challenged rational theories of action with psychological approaches, and parallel developments in epistemology, which criticised realist models of reality, led to a growing interest in the cognition of organisational members. These developments altered the way the problem of organising was perceived by shifting the focus from the coordination of members' actions, to the mental models of organisational members that are presumed to inform their actions. Mental models are far more difficult to grasp than mere behaviour. Furthermore, in the con-

structionist view, the coordination of individuals must happen in spite of multiple and competing understandings of their organisational worlds (Weick 1995, p. 35). As a consequence the problem of organising unravelled into a myriad of tricky questions about meaning and significance that are not easily answered and have far reaching implications for management. Questions like what constitutes facts and why are certain facts picked up on whilst others ignored? How much of the environment is out there and how much is (self-referentially) in here? To what extent and in which ways are our environmental constraints of our own making? How are beliefs tied to actions or how do actions shape beliefs?

2.1.2 Sensemaking approach to organising

Organisational sensemaking as a theory sets out to tackle these questions in a consistent way. It describes the processes by which collective sense is created in organisations by various means of cognitive organising that connects frames, constituted by previous rounds of preserved sense made, with cues extracted from the ongoing flow of reality, ordered and connected by this act of framing in a way that has the potential to further construct the frame (Weick 1995, p. 110). Organisational sensemaking is thus an individual and collective process of cognitive organising that simultaneously organises and is organised by the mutual adjustment among individuals engaged in the coordination of everyday practices. According to Weick this happens constantly in all organisations, but it is of particular importance, and most easily observed, in loosely-coupled organisations finding themselves in uncertain environments, because these organisations experience many moments requiring collective calibration regarding their environments and their identity (Weick 1995, p. 70).

2.1.3 Plan of this chapter

This chapter describes Weick's organisational sensemaking theory and situates it in organisation theory and broader epistemology. The first section describes Weick's conception of sensemaking as a collective phenomenon

in organisations, the minimal components necessary for sense to be made, the occasions requiring the normally automatic process of sensemaking to switch to active attempts to restore a sensible reality, and the various levels of sensemaking. The second section considers the operational aspects of organisational sensemaking against the preceding theoretical and historical background. First the actual operation of organisational sensemaking is described from the point of view of participants in organisations by explaining the action-driven and belief-driven ways in which participants impose sense on ongoing flows. Second the organisational sensemaking process is described from the point of view of organisations following the model provided by Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2005). The third section seeks to establish the status of organisational sensemaking as a perspective in the field of organisation and management studies. The challenge of organisational sensemaking theory to the dominant approaches is summarised, the major criticisms and shortcomings of organisational sensemaking are considered, and an account of Weick's influence on the field and divergent legacy is forwarded.

2.2 Description of organisational sensemaking

According to sensemaking theory, people do not merely perceive an external reality, they collectively achieve it—sensemaking is a theory about the social construction of reality. This constructed reality is as much the result of the language and cultural tools which people use to make sense, as it is of the social "reality" about which these constructions are created. Organisational sensemaking is a theory about how sense is made collectively in contexts that lack the stability required by automatic sensemaking. Weick (1995, p. 15) argues that people are actively and collectively engaged in an ongoing sensemaking process that goes beyond interpretation. He distinguishes between the derivation of meaning and the making of meaning—which he calls sensemaking. Interpretation and understanding, narrowly conceived

by Weick, involves the derivation of meaning; in contrast, sensemaking is "about the ways in which people generate what they interpret" (Weick 1995, p. 13). Later in section 4.3, we'll critically analyse this distinction by Weick to show that he has a partial view of hermeneutics. For the moment however it is sufficient to observe that making and deriving meaning are related processes, but Weick does not see meaning and sense as simply two views on the same phenomenon. For him, sense is not dormant in meaning, it is not derived or discovered; it has to be *made*.

2.2.1 Properties of sensemaking

Weick lists and explains seven properties of sensemaking to distinguish it from what he considers mere interpretation (Weick 1995, pp. 17–61): 1) Sensemaking is grounded in identity construction, 2) is retrospective, 3) is enactive of sensible environments, 4) is social, 5) is ongoing, 6) is focused on and by extracted cues, 7) and is driven by plausibility rather than accuracy. In a later article (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld 2005, pp. 410–413) these properties are called "distinctive features" of sensemaking and the distinctiveness is pointed out in relation to perceived lacuna in organisation theory rather than to theories of interpretation. In addition the list of features changes slightly to: 1) sensemaking organises flux, 2) starts with noticing and bracketing, 3) is about labelling, 4) is retrospective, 5) is about presumption, 6) is social and systemic, 7) is about action, and 8) is about organising through communication . In both cases the properties or features of sensemaking are described at the level of an individual sensemaker, rather than at the collective level, which necessitates a further argument about the levels of sensemaking before Weick can outline *organisational* sensemaking. The items from the original list are described below.

Sensemaking is grounded in identity construction. Sense is not an objective given in the world; it has to be made sensible only if there is someone who needs this sense to navigate the world. Sense is made by someone who undertakes the active authoring role. Sensemaking is undertaken in service of maintaining a consistent self-identity and

threats to this identity triggers intentional sensemaking (Weick 1995, p. 23). The environment contains both threats to and resources for the construction of identity (Weick 1995, p. 23). The constructed self-identity is the vantage point from which events are sensed and acted upon, and sensemakers "simultaneously try to shape and react to the environments they face" (Weick 1995, p. 23).[1]

Sensemaking is retrospective Sensemaking looks backwards because it is only possible to make sense of phenomena that already exists. Weick relies on the formulation of "meaningful lived experience" by Shutz (Weick 1995, p. 24) and that of James's "stream of experience" to explain that the stream of experience (singular) only becomes distinct memorable and sensible experiences (plural) when one brackets certain parts of the stream into discrete units of experience to direct attention to and to connect to other bracketed units of passed experiences (Weick 1995, p. 25). Attention can only be directed retrospectively to experiences that already happened. From this follows a number of implications, namely that meanings change as the vantage point from which one looks back changes (Weick 1995, pp. 26–27), and what one remembers and how well (Weick 1995, p. 26) determines what cues and frames are available.

Sensemaking is enactive of sensible environments Enactment is a central feature of sensemaking. Weick uses the word enactment to describe the fact that the environment (and its opportunities and constraints for making sense) is partially created by the people who face it (Weick 1995, pp. 30–31). The environment is not specifiable without relating it to the actor whose environment it is. Furthermore actions taken changes the environment in ways that might feed back on actors in the environment. On a macro-level, enactment holds that people take actions to stabilise their environment to make it sensible

[1] This property of sensemaking is central to our consideration of organisational identity in later chapters. Weick has a sophisticated view of identity construction centred on the notion of a 'parliament of selves' and this will be analysed in depth later.

to them. Many such actions taken over a long time creates a socially constructed environment. On a micro-level, the selection of certain cues (and neglecting others) for framing with a particular frame (in preference to others) is enactment too.

Sensemaking is social. The meaning arrived at by sensemaking processes is constructed, but it is also *socially* constructed. Weick (1995, p. 39) stresses that sensemaking is a social process depending on intersubjective understandings arrived at in the assumed presence of others who are also trying to make sense. Many of the resources used during the sensemaking process (like language for instance) are only available because we are socialised into it.

Sensemaking is ongoing. Weick (1995, p. 44) relies on the phenomenological notion of 'thrownness'—we find ourselves living in the world before we have the conceptual apparatus necessary to interpret it—to explain that sensemaking does not have a defined start or end. People are constantly making sense. There are however instances where the ongoing flow of experience is interrupted by surprises or shocks. These instances switch our sensemaking from automatic to deliberate mode (Weick 1995, p. 46). However, the switch to a deliberate, more focused, mode of making sense, is not a starting point, rather it is simply a change that brings an automatic background process to the foreground.

Sensemaking is focused on and by extracted cues. The flow of experience comprises a multitude of stimuli, the bulk of which goes unnoticed. Some of these are noticed as cues and are selected and filtered in a framing process that elaborates these extracted cues by connecting them in a coherent fashion to past moments of sense already made (Weick 1995, p. 51). What gets selected depends in part on the framing by the sensemaker and the preferences for certain cues and in part on how salient the cues themselves are in relation to the rest of the flow (Weick 1995, p. 53).

Sensemaking is driven by plausibility rather than accuracy. Weick (1995, pp. 56–57) argues that accuracy is not only hard to achieve, but is unnecessary for sense to be made. Far more important is a plausible coherence (Weick 1995, p. 60). In fact, accuracy can be an inconvenient barrier to a coherent narrative that is reasonable to most people. In a world with a surplus of equivocal meanings, multiple coherent stories may be constructed (Weick 1995, p. 61), making accuracy less important than plausibility and verisimilitude for sense to be made.

This list of properties merely differentiates the sensemaking approach from other approaches it might be confused with, it does not yet explain the structure of sensemaking, the occasions demanding its active mode, how it works on the organisational level, its stability over time, the strategies for its construction, or its process. In short, for an understanding of *organisational* sensemaking the seven properties are only preliminary background features.

2.2.2 Minimal sensible structures

The minimum necessary for a person to make sense, is a cognitive frame with which to select, order and connect the cues noticed when events or objects are perceived. Sense depends on the cues that get noticed because of the particular framing and the relation established between the frame in use and the cues filtered through it. According to Weick (1995, p. 110), "[a] cue in a frame is what makes sense, not the cue alone or the frame alone". In this, Weick was inspired by Upton (1961, p. 31) who argued that "[y]ou must have three: a thing, a relation, and another thing. The meaning of one of them is determined by your momentary awareness of the other two". Weick (1995, pp. 110–111) follows Upton's line of argument to establish cue+relation+frame as the unit of meaning underlying sensemaking. Upton (1961, p. 32) talks of moments of recognition when the connection is made between the various elements as "seeing some sort of resemblance to one or more....past moments". Translating it into sensemaking terms, Weick (1995, p. 111) equates frames with past moments of sense already made,

cues with present moments of experience, and the successful connection as the meaningful relation. He points out that the content of the frames and the cues and where the connection is initiated from are less important for sensemaking than the presence of all three elements. In other words, multi-directional recipes for sense become possible as long as the minimal sensible structure of this triumvirate is present.

Of course the frames of past experience and the cues of the present experience contain various kinds of content. The content of the cues depend on what gets noticed and extracted for framing. The content of the frames derive from previous rounds of sense made by ourselves, our peers, and our predecessors—in other words, the frames are socially constructed. Cultures, paradigms, and stories are examples of sets of content that make up these cognitive frames that are relatively stable over time and available to us to impose on new experiences and situations. Weick (1995, pp. 106–132) calls these sets "vocabularies" of sensemaking.

Talking of the substance of sensemaking as vocabularies is part of an extended language metaphor that Weick uses throughout linking back to his initial recipe for sensemaking "How can I know what I think until I see what I say?", first introduced in an early book (Weick 1979, p. 133) and repeated in a later book (Weick 1995, p. 12), this time credited to an anecdote by Wallas.[2] Discussing the substance of sensemaking, Weick (1995, chapter 5) continues this metaphor to drive home the point that the language we use to make sense is a determining filter for the outcome of the process.

> If people know what they think when they see what they say, the words figure in every step. Words constrain the saying that is produced, the categories imposed to see the saying, and the labels with which the conclusions of this process are retained. Thus words matter (Weick 1995, p. 106).

[2]In the later version Weick (1995, p. 12) writes: "To see this, think about the wonderfully compact account of sensemaking mentioned by Graham Wallas. 'The little girl had the making of a poet in her who, being told to be sure of her meaning before she spoke, said: How can I know what I think till I see what I say?'(Wallas, 1926, p. 106). This recipe, which is central in organizational sensemaking (Weick, 1979, p. 133), retains several elements of dissonance theory".

He argues that words that matter to individuals are derived from a vocabulary that depends on a larger social collectivity for its availability (Weick 1995, p. 107), but that sensemaking cannot stop, because the words capture the ongoing flow of experience imperfectly (Weick 1995, p. 107).

2.2.3 Occasions for sensemaking

One property of sensemaking is that it is ongoing (Weick 1995, pp. 43–49) and therefore never starts or stops, because the flow of experience is continuous. Sensemaking is an ongoing background achievement and therefore not noticeable. However, when ongoing projects are disrupted or people face too many or too few meaningful resources in the context, sensemaking can no longer continue as an automatic background process. These are moments that call for intentional directed actions to restore meaningful coherence. Interruptions are physiologically experienced in the form of autonomic arousal (Weick 1995, pp. 45–46) that increases the demand for sense to be made. Weick (1995, p. 86) calls these moments, 'occasions for sensemaking' and discusses the varieties of such occasions. Weick is at pains to explain that the interruptions experienced as shocks are not always the result of external ecological change. The shocks, that present themselves as occasions for deliberate sensemaking, are themselves socially constructed and often enacted (Weick 1995, p. 85). He then devotes a section (Weick 1995, pp. 86–91) to a review of prior research that can shed light on the nature of these occasions, namely perceived environmental uncertainty,[3] information load, complexity, and turbulence,[4] as well as a distinction between automatic and controlled information processing[5] that could serve as analogy for the switch from automatic to deliberate sensemaking.

[3]For this discussion Weick relies on Duncan, R. (1972) Characteristics of organizational environments and perceived environmental uncertainty. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 17, pp. 313-327.

[4]Following Huber, G.P. and Daft, R.L. (1987) The information environments of organizations, in F.M. Jablin, L.L. Putnam, K.H. Roberts and L.W. Porter (Eds.) *Handbook of Organizational Communication*, pp. 130-164.

[5]Based on Louis, M.R. and Sutton, R.I. (1991). Switching cognitive gears: From habits of mind to active thinking. *Human Relations* 44, pp. 55-76.

Weick considers two occasions for sensemaking that frequently occur in organisations. The first is ambiguity where people experience a shock of failed sensemaking, because they are confused by too many meanings present in the situation (Weick 1995, p. 91). With ambiguity the addition of more cues will make it harder to reestablish coherence. Instead, what is needed is the calibration or narrowing of the frame(s) with which the filtering of cues is done (Weick 1995, p. 99). The second is uncertainty where people experience a shock of ignorance, because they lack sufficient information to construct plausible sense (Weick 1995, p. 91). With uncertainty, the number of cues in the frame need to be increased (Weick 1995, p. 99). Weick (1995, p. 100) warns that often people conflate these two very different situations and take precisely the wrong actions in an effort to make sense.

These shocks of interruptions, confusion, or ignorance are significant in organisations, because they are settings where people try to minimise their occurrence by coordinating and planning. However the traditional model of rational organisation where the organisational hierarchy and the environment are stable, minimises the number of shocks whilst risking their magnitude when they do occur. Moreover, in loosely coupled organisations in uncertain environments the ongoing sense established is of a more fragile nature, which makes the drive for sensemaking more urgent. Weick (1995, p. 70) points out that in the case of loosely coupled organisations in uncertain environments sense has to be made both about what is going on outside in the environment and about what is happening inside the organisation. This is so because, in the case of loose coupling, the organisation itself has to be made sense of by its members as much as they need to make sense of the environment. The significant effort spent by organisations on forging a collective identity and formulating a mission, vision, and strategy can therefore be seen in sensemaking terms.[6]

[6]The second part of the dissertation will zoom in on exactly this issue.

2.2.4 Levels of organisational sensemaking

Introducing the concept of sensemaking and differentiating it from similar concepts it might be confused with,[7] Weick relies on evidence from social psychological research about how individuals navigate their social reality. However, his goal is not to dwell on the accepted social psychological insights about how individuals make sense; instead he intends to argue for collective sensemaking in organisations and for this he needs an ontology of levels of sensemaking beyond the individual level. From the social property of sensemaking, it is obvious that no purely individual sensemaking is possible. The social mechanics of so-called individual sensemaking is best demonstrated regarding Weick's discussion of identity construction, where an individual projects an identity to the social context in anticipation of their response and trying to influence that response (Weick 1995, p. 23). The implied point is that whilst an individual is projecting a constructed identity in the social context, that context is not neutral, but comprises other individuals projecting constructed identities of their own back hoping for their own sensible outcome. The result is a picture of mutually adjusting individuals all trying to navigate and influence a fluid social context in the service of continuity and understanding. Its dynamism and emergent properties notwithstanding, when considering the level of analysis, the social context is merely the backdrop against which individuals make sense. This holds for Weick's discussion of general sensemaking and therefore he requires an ontology of levels as a starting point for his theorisation of organisational sensemaking—not conceptualised as individuals navigating a social context, but as a collective sensemaking that endures beyond specific individual participants. For Weick (1995, p. 64) organisations are both a context for and an outcome of sensemaking processes.

For this ontology of levels, Weick (1995, p. 70) refers to Wiley (1988) as saying that there are four levels of sensemaking namely the individual, intersubjective, generic subjective, and extra-subjective levels of sensemaking.

[7] Amongst others, Weick is adamant that sensemaking is *not* the same as interpretation and *not* a metaphor either. In both cases it is because sensemaking involves acting in and on the world.

This ontology of levels is pivotal for moving from individual to organisational sensemaking. The intersubjective level represents the everyday sensemaking of individuals in social interaction with other individuals to come to intersubjective understanding through the intersection of individuals' sense made. Here we are in the realm of social psychology and social construction as conceived originally by Berger and Luckmann (1966). To achieve permanence and repeatability over time, the sense made must be freed from the intersubjective context of concrete individual interaction and be frozen in the social structure of roles and rules. Generic subjective sensemaking is on this abstract level of social structure and this is the way mainstream institutionalists think of social construction as the sedimentation of role and rule structures that constitute institutions.

Let's move to the foundation of this argument, where Weick introduces Wiley's ontology in this way:

> A different way to talk about sensemaking at more macro levels is to pursue Wiley's (1988) argument that there are three levels of sensemaking "above" the individual level of analysis (Weick 1995, p. 70).

This formulation makes it seem as though Wiley identified levels of sensemaking, whilst Wiley never refers explicitly to sensemaking, instead he is engaged with a meta-theoretical argument about the micro-macro problem in social theory. In his paper, Wiley (1988) provides a conceptual analysis of several notions of levels, then identifies the levels of analysis within the discipline of sociology,[8] and then speculates about how the levels are connected. How Weick introduced Wiley's levels concept matters, because it is one thing to use the different levels to describe the extent of a field of inquiry (the meta-theoretical way Wiley uses it) and another thing to use the different levels for different levels of cognition (the substantive way Weick wants to use it). Wiley categorises what sociologists say about the world, whilst Weick makes a claim about how the world works. Weick

[8]These are the levels that Weick (1995, p. 70) reports as "levels of sensemaking".

probably would have done better to explain that he intends to use Wiley's typology about the levels of analysis in sociology in an analogous way to explore the levels at which sense is made. Such an analogous argument can be very helpful to understand the link between individual and organisational sensemaking better, but Wiley cannot be invoked to support the claim that there is collective sensemaking above the individual level.[9]

There is nothing scripted in the order of things about the way Durkheim and Wiley use these levels. Wiley distinguishes four conceptions of levels: 1) generalization-abstraction levels refer to the widening of the extension (the referent) of a concept by narrowing its intension (the signified) thus enlarging the set of things by diluting the properties required for membership; 2) meta– or reflexive levels refer to conceptual perches from which to consider the lower levels;[10] 3) historicist levels refer to the widening of single cases by extending the time under consideration;[11] and 4) sui generis or emergent levels are levels of emergent differentiation where phenomena are focused on for closer analysis—a list of things to be studied in a particular field. According to Wiley, this is the procedure by which Durkheim opened the field of sociology (Wiley 1988, p. 255) and also the primary conception of levels that Wiley aims to use for exploring the micro-macro problem in the field of sociology.

For the purposes of his argument Wiley opts for a conception of emergent levels derived from Durkheim (Wiley 1988, p. 255). Starting with Durkheim's levels of "the physical, chemical, biological, psychological, and social" (Wiley 1988, p. 255), he discards the three non-rational levels and adds the levels of interaction and culture to the two rational levels identified

[9]For this reason Weick needs additional argument and my claim is that he is not equipped for that argument, because the theoretical resources he had available to fashion it with, given his background, do not have a properly worked out macro component. Perhaps this accounts for the way he introduces organisational sensemaking in *Sensemaking in Organizations*, where it is anchored in individual sensemaking.

[10]Weick's frames could be seen as levels of this kind. By introducing Wiley as if he had levels of sensemaking in mind, Weick missed an opportunity to use Wiley's argument about the different kinds of levels thinking to a point of potential misunderstanding about whether different levels of sensemaking are meta-levels or sui generis levels.

[11]Wiley (1988, p. 255) points out that "widening time-space perimeters are sometimes called levels, but they are perhaps better conceived as continua".

by Durkheim, resulting in the four levels that Weick took as inspiration. The whole point of this exercise is for Wiley to address the micro-macro problem in sociological theory. Hence he starts with one of the fathers of the discipline (Durkheim), and consign the psychological (the self) and interactive levels to the micro side and the social (structure) and culture levels to the macro side of the distinction (Wiley 1988, pp. 255–256), whilst treating the non-rational levels of physical, chemical, and biological as external to the problem.

2.2.5 Organising as collective action

In an earlier engagement with the collective level, Weick (1979, chapter 4) relies on a conceptualisation of organisational processes as interlocking individual behaviours,[12] where the behaviour of one person is a response contingent on the behaviour of another person. Weick (1979, pp. 89–90) then describes three ways of understanding such interlocked behaviours, namely Allport's concept of collective action (Allport 1962), Wallace's mutual equivalence structure (Wallace 1961), and Kelley's research about the conditions under which the minimal social situation produces mutually beneficial outcomes (Kelley 1968), before turning to ideas from Simon (1962) about sub-assemblies for inspiration about how to design assemblies of double interacts (Weick 1979, pp. 112–117) that make up interlocked cycles of behaviour that, in his view, are the elements of organising.

Allport's concept of collective structure hinge on the idea that actors don't have to agree on ends to act collectively; all that is initially needed is for them to converge on means (Weick 1979, pp. 91–92). This inverts the common assumption that people need to agree on ends before designing the means, into common ends following from converging means that originally meant to serve divergent, but intersecting, individual ends. A series of interlocked behaviours are formed around intersecting means even though each actor participates in the service of divergent goals. Repeated cycles of

[12]Note the difference in the use of terms between the early and later Weick. Here Weick focuses on 'behaviour' whilst later the stress is on 'action'.

interlocked behaviours then hold the possibility of group development on the basis of inertia from means-convergence to ends-convergence as double interacts leads to participants sub-ordinating divergent ends to an emerging set of shared ends because the range of behaviours are narrowed by the interlocking behaviour (Weick 1979, pp. 96–97).

> The concept of collective structure by no means includes everything that is in a group. As should be apparent, there is virtually no end to the list of symptoms one could use to characterize a group. The relevant point about collective structure is that it is assumed to be a basic building block for the creation of larger collectivities. The concept retains the fact that groups are composed of individuals and that groups are defined in terms of observable behaviors, but it does not overlook the fact that groups are unique. The concept anchors this uniqueness in a property not found in isolated individuals: repetitive inter-structured behaviors. (Weick 1979, p. 97)

Wallace's mutual equivalence structure trades on a distinction between instrumental actions that enable and build up towards eventual concluding actions and consummating actions that are the concluding actions that consume some payoff or reward. Mutual equivalence structures come into play when one person's ability to complete consummating action depends on the instrumental actions of another person that in turn can be induced by an instrumental act of the person wanting to complete the concluding action. This situation forms an "implicit contract" (Weick 1979, p. 100) that depends on mutual expectations and prediction ability. Wallace points out that through such mutual equivalence structures "individuals can produce a socio-cultural system which is beyond their own comprehension" (Wallace 1961, p. 38). Weick uses research evidence about mutual equivalence structures to show that instrumental acts—like the convergent means in Allport's collective structures—can lead to coordination between individuals with minimal sharing and without agreement on ends (Weick 1979, p. 98). This point segues into the properties of retrospect and enactment of Weick's

sensemaking theory, because the common purpose is established retrospectively, whilst the instrumental acts enact situations where consummating acts are beneficial.

Weick (1979, p. 103) recounts laboratory experiments using "the minimal social situation" where two people control each other's outcomes by pressing buttons that deliver punishment or reward. The point is that the test subjects are unaware of each other's presence, yet the behaviour of each participant feeds back, not to themselves, but to the other participant. Kelley et al. (1962) showed that in this minimal social situation created in the experiment, participants can reach mutually advantageous solutions even whilst unaware of each other's presence, with cross-feedback of their behaviour, and in the non-verbal setting. Weick (1979, p. 104) regards the fact that the mutually beneficial relationship develops unconsciously, unintentionally, and tacitly as proof of how little is required for interlocking behaviour to occur. Later research (Rabinowitz, Kelley, and Rosenblatt 1966) uncovered that the conditions under which mutually beneficial interlocking behaviour emerges is determined by whether the interdependence of their actions amount to fate or behavioural control and the extent to which the timing of their responses are synchronised. A configuration of mutual fate control and synchronisation, or where one party controls fate whilst the other controls behaviour with asynchronous timing, are examples where mutually beneficial behaviours could emerge in the minimal social situation experiments (Weick 1979, p. 104). Weick moves from these classic experimental psychology studies to a hypothetical real world example[13] to consider the extent to which real-life settings differ from the laboratory (Weick 1979, pp. 106–109).

In the end the point Weick wants to make by citing these experiments is that social structures are capable of functioning with incomplete knowledge among participants. For him the three areas of research—Wallace's mutual equivalence, Allport's collective structures, and Kelley's research on

[13]The examples is of salesperson and proprietor interaction where frequency of trade visits interacts with whether or not the proprietor grants exclusive supplier rights to the salesperson.

the minimal social situation—"are building blocks that can be aggregated into enormously complicated structures without the necessity of any single person knowing, understanding, or even visualizing that entire structure" (Weick 1979, p. 109). This is then the basis of Weick's early insights regarding organisations as collectivities where individuals 'muddle through' making sense along the way, enabling the organisation to work even though nobody seems to know what is *really* going on.

This review of Weick's early thinking about organisational collectivities adds support for the claim that his notion of organisational sensemaking is rooted in an aggregated view of individuals—where individuals acting on local information and in service of their own goals in response to a context consisting of other individuals doing the same thing back to them, create an emergent pattern of behaviour of unfolding complexity that we can recognise as organisation. The way Weick moves from the individual to the collective level of sensemaking, by starting from minimal interaction and considering the emergent pattern that results from interlocking behaviours, resonates with interactionist approaches to studying the social world.

2.3 Operational aspects of organisational sensemaking

Up to now we considered the ideas informing organisational sensemaking and the components of the theory and how they interact, we turn next to the operation of sensemaking in the world. We've seen that sensemaking is about selecting, connecting, and elaborating cues by framing them. The frame, which consists of previous rounds of sense made, assists the noticing of certain stimuli and selecting them as cues and is the basis for connecting and elaborating these cues. It might be that multiple and overlapping frames are available and when that is the case a combination of the vividness of certain stimuli, the order in which they are noticed, and the preference on the part of the sensemaker for a particular frame, will determine which framing dominates in the process of selecting cues to make sense of by

connecting them in terms of the frame. The mechanism of sensemaking revolves around this triumvirate of cues, frames, and the connection made between them. The operational question is how this typically happens in an organisational context. According to Weick (1995, pp. 134–135), there are primarily four ways in which people in organisations connect frames with cues, in doing so bracketing the ongoing flows of stimuli and framing selected cues in service of making sense of a puzzling situation. Weick (1995, p. 135) explains that people start with whatever is clearer at first—actions or beliefs—and then make sense by connecting it with what is less clear. Thus, a different way of looking at the four ways of connecting frames and cues is to depict it as two belief-driven ways that connect beliefs to actions and two action-driven ways that connect actions to beliefs.

2.3.1 Belief-driven sensemaking

Beliefs are framing devices that influence people's preferences for particular cues and what they pay attention to when noticing things. Prior beliefs also colour the way cues that were selectively noticed are interpreted. Weick (1995, pp. 133–134) identifies two ways in which people impose frames in a belief-driven way, arguing and expecting.

Arguing is a belief-driven way to make sense by connecting what seems contradictory. Weick (1995, p. 134) explains that arguing is necessary because people believe different things and this variety of beliefs needs to be reduced to achieve a concomitant reduction in the variety of cues selected and thus reducing competing sensible outcomes. Organisations create frequent opportunities and sites for arguing. Weick (1995, p. 136) invokes evidence from several authors[14] to show how central arguing is to organi-

[14] He refers to Anderson, R. A. (1983). Decision making by objection and the Cuban missile crisis. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 28, pp. 201–222; Cohen, M. D., March, I. G., and Olsen, J.P. (1972). A garbage can model of organizational choice. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 17, pp. 1–25; Hage, J. (1980). *Theories of Organizations: Form, Process, and Transformation.* New York: John Wiley; Huff, A. S. (1988). Politics and argument as a means of coping with ambiguity and change. In Pondy, L. R., Boland, R. J. and Thomas, H. (Eds.), *Managing Ambiguity and Change.* New York: John Wiley, pp. 79-90; and Schmidt, K. (1991). Cooperative work: A conceptual framework. In Rasmussen, J., Brehmer, B. and Leplat, J. (Eds.), *Distributed Decision Making: Cognitive*

sational activity. Weick (1995, p. 143) refers to the work of Schwartzman (1987) about meetings as occasions where sensemaking as arguing is routinely enabled in organisations. According to Schwartzman (1989, p. 11), "meetings can both generate and maintain an organization by providing individuals with activity and with a way to make sense of this activity and their relationship to each other". In addition, meetings create the infrastructure for organisational sensemaking, because they are contexts where minority and majority claims are (supposed to be) settled by argument (Weick 1995, p. 144).

To explain the nature of argument, Weick (1995, p. 138) relies on Brockriede's description of argument as a reasoning process linking one idea to another that starts with an inference made from existing beliefs in the service of either adopting new ideas or reinforcing existing ideas. According to Brockriede (1974, p. 166) this reasoning process requires a rationale for the belief-driven inference made, the presence of competing claims that have to be resolved, an uncertainty reduction strategy, and a preparedness to defend one's choice to others. Weick (1995, p. 138) explains that organisational sensemaking often starts with the confrontation that results from defending one's choice to one's colleagues. During the argument the participants provide each other with explanations and "in the process of developing and criticizing explanation, people often discover new explanations, which is why argument can produce adaptive sensemaking (p.172)" (Weick 1995, p. 139).[15]

Argument is an effective strategy when holding a minority position. To make this point, Weick (1995, p. 140) reviews research about social influence processes that followed on findings by Nail (1986) that people are pressured into accepting majority positions. Pointing to a meta-analysis of studies about social influence processes by Wood et al. (1994), Weick (1995, p. 140) describes the situations where argument can influence people to be swayed by the minority position upon later reflection. With the help of a distinction by Moscovici (1980) between the compliance that results from

Models for Cooperative Work. Chichester, UK: Wiley, pp. 75-110).

[15]The reference to page 172 is Weick citing Brockriede.

the majority position pressure and the conversion that may result from the minority position, he explains how minority arguments induce different thought processes from those made from a majority position. Weick (1995, p. 141) points to the claim by (Nemeth 1986) that minority positions demand qualitatively different thinking and greater cognitive effort from listeners than majority positions, because minority arguments highlight alternatives not explored by majority positions. As a result majority positions lead to convergent thought (Weick 1995, p. 141), while minority positions demand divergent thinking, which increases the frames and cues available for sensemaking. Defending a position through argument involves an elaboration of that position in a process of sensemaking starting from the initially held beliefs and the associated framing of the situation.

Expecting, in contrast, is a belief-driven way to make sense by connecting what is similar. The archetypical case of expecting is the self-fulfilling prophecy: "As they dwell on what might happen, peoples's expectations become better articulated, stronger, and potentially more capable of being a potent force in their own validation" (Weick 1995, p. 134). Whilst the initial expectation might be a false definition of the situation, from a sensemaking perspective the expectation is a belief-driven starting point in situations where very few resources with which to make sense of the situation are available.

Weick (1995, p. 148) refers back to the "Pygmalion in the Classroom" study by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968)[16] as a foundational study for the powerful role of expectations in focusing people's actions and thus resulting in self-fulfilling prophecies. Weick (1995, pp. 150–151) relies on the analysis about serial self-fulfilling prophecies by Henshel (1987) to consider the amplification effect of expectations. He argues that confirmed predictions lead to increased confidence, which in turn stabilises the situation which makes it more meaningful, thus reinforcing the self-fulfilment of the cycle (Weick 1995, pp. 150–151). He links this to parallel research about

[16]The effect described by this study is the resultant better performance by average students as a consequence of teachers lavishing extra attention on them, because the teachers were told these students are exceptionally gifted.

when behavioural confirmation occurs and refers (Weick 1995, p. 153) to results reported by Snyder (1992) that striving for accuracy avoids self-fulfilling prophecies, but in situations where perceivers strive for continuity and stability they are susceptible to behavioural confirmation during social interactions. This concern for stability and predictability is a feature of organisational decisionmaking situations where "the costs of being indecisive frequently outweighs the costs of being wrong" (Weick 1995, p. 153). The time pressure and turnover in participants that are features of many organisational situations mean that as a rule accuracy cannot be achieved and Weick (1995, p. 153) cites this as a reason why expectations are such a powerful force in organisational sensemaking.

> Expectations, compared to arguments, tend to be held more strongly. Furthermore, people tend to be more interested in confirming than in rebutting or contradicting them....In short, expectations are more directive than arguments. Because expectations operate with a heavier hand, they tend to filter input more severely, which raises a whole host of issues concerning accuracy, error, and the limits of social construction. (Weick 1995, p. 145)

Weick (1995, pp. 153–154) explains that expectations provide a foothold of stability that, once achieved, makes it possible to focus on accuracy through arguments. In other words, when the situation is in flux, expecting will dominate until sufficient stability is enacted to make arguing a viable sensemaking strategy. However, over time the socially constructed stability might come under threat and the context will once again be ripe for another round of stabilisation through expectations and self-fulfilling prophecies.

2.3.2 Action-driven sensemaking

Sensemaking can also be anchored in actions, whilst the beliefs are shaped to explain what is already enacted. In his earlier work, Weick (1979, p. 157) focused on enactment as a process that increases equivocality (or deviation

amplification) that people try to manage and make sensible through organising and explaining. In his later work, Weick (1995, p. 156) identifies two ways in which people impose frames on ongoing flows in an action-driven way, depending on whether they seek to explain a single action or multiple parallel actions: commitment concerns actions for which the actor feels responsible triggering retrospective rationalisation of those actions, whilst manipulation concerns multiple actions that visibly changed the environment to make events more stable and easier to explain.

Committing is an action-driven way to make sense by justifying irrevocable actions that were high in volition and visibility. Committing to prior actions is often the easiest way to reduce cognitive dissonance, because it is easier to shape beliefs than changing or hiding some actions. Weick relies on Kiesler (1971) to explain the psychology of commitment to binding actions—those that are explicit, public and irrevocable. Targeted sensemaking can be expected to occur around those actions high in commitment. Once an action is considered binding and consequential, responsibility for it must be taken or shifted. Weick explains how actions with important consequences demand greater commitment from the person deemed responsible for it. He refers to research by Staw (1982, p. 103) that established increases in responsibility when actions demand significant effort and were taken willingly (in situations low on external demands and extrinsic reasons for the actions). Commitment focuses attention on the actions that are being justified and at the same time draws attention away from the alternatives that are left unconsidered (Weick 1995, p. 159). As attention is focused on the search for justifying reasons, new and previously unnoticed features of the action and reasons for it are uncovered. At the same time, the relative neglect of alternative options reduce the opportunity for noticing contrary reasons and makes the alternatives less valued.

Organisations are sites where commitments are more visible and these commitments need to be interpreted or explained. The commitment recipe is “a setting where there is action, publicity, choice, high stakes, and low tolerance for mistakes” (Weick 1995, p. 158). Weick (1995, p. 159) points out that the ingredients of this recipe are abundant in organisations and

that those organisations where the ingredients routinely intersect might be more sensible to their participants than organisations where this is not the case. Weick (1995, p. 161) also considers the dark side of excessive commitment that leads to escalation—situations where decision-makers become committed to courses of action with a positive feedback loop radically increasing the level of commitment. However, he argues that the danger of escalation is related to the degree of environmental determinism (Weick 1995, p. 162): "commitment slows adaptation if environmental determinism is high .... , but can hasten adaptation if determinism is low" (Weick 1995, p. 161). Said differently, commitment is not the only action-driven way to make sense starting with actions, another possibility is to enact a more sensible environment through multiple actions and so manipulate it.

Manipulating is an action-driven way to make sense by taking actions to change the environment so that it can be explained. Weick (1995, p. 165) notes that "[s]ensemaking by manipulation involves acting in ways that create an environment that people can then comprehend and manage". Of course, action-driven sensemaking is present in the way organisations enact their environments all the time. Weick borrows the image of 'manipulation' from Hedberg, Nystrom, and Starbuck (1976, p. 46) that said: "Processes by which an organization impresses itself into its environment can be called manipulative". Weick refers to a study by Lanzara (1983) about ephemeral organisations that sprang up in the wake of an earthquake to illustrate how enactment can create both structures and an environment that is sensible, thus enabling further rounds of action-driven sensemaking around the emergent stability. According to Weick these examples moderate the negative connotations of the concept of manipulation—it "need not be heavy-handed....to create something sensible that others can see and interpret" (Weick 1995, p. 168). Whilst commitment involves discrete actions that need to be justified, manipulation is about multiple actions intended to stabilise an environment so that it can be successfully interpreted.

2.3.3 The organisational sensemaking process

Having now described the operational aspect of sensemaking from the perspective of the participants, we move to how the organisational sensemaking process structures the organisation and is in turn structured by organising. Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2005) propose that organisation evolve over time through an enactment/ecological change, selection and retention (ESR) sequence that they describe as follows:

> The basic evolutionary process assumed by sensemaking is one in which retrospective interpretations are built during interdependent interaction. [...] It proposes that sensemaking can be treated as reciprocal exchanges between actors (Enactment) and their environments (Ecological Change) that are made meaningful (Selection) and preserved (Retention). However, these exchanges will continue only if the preserved content is both believed (positive causal linkage) and doubted (negative causal linkage) in future enacting and selecting. (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld 2005, pp. 413–414)

Weick introduced the ESR-sequence in *The Social Psychology of Organizing* (Weick 1979), which was focused primarily on enactment, then he embroidered on those ideas in developing a fuller theory of organisational cognition in *Sensemaking in Organizations* (Weick 1995), before returning to a restatement of the sequence in the article *Organizing and the Process of Sensemaking* (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld 2005). The purpose of the last work was to "restate sensemaking in ways that make it more future oriented, more action oriented, more macro, more closely tied to organizing, meshed more boldly with identity, more visible, more behaviorally defined, less sedentary and backward looking, more infused with emotion and with issues of sensegiving and persuasion" (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld 2005, p. 409). Weick wants to show that organising processes are sensemaking processes, "people organise to make sense of equivocal inputs and enact this sense back into the world to make that world more orderly" (Weick,

Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld 2005, p. 414). Highlighting the close relationship between sensemaking and organising favours enactment at the slight expense of retrospect.

Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2005, p. 414) fit the sensemaking process into this sequence model of organising by pointing to retention feeding back onto all the prior steps in the sequence. In original sensemaking language, only what was retained will be available for framing what is noticed at each step in the sequence.

Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2005, p. 414) represents the relationship between enactment, organising, and sensemaking as depicted in Figure 21. The remaining properties of sensemaking fit onto this enactment-ecological change, selection, and retention backbone. Although the ESR-sequence is analytically presented as a sequence model, in practice all the elements are simultaneously in play with mutual influence. Enactment and ecological change interact—sensing occasions demanding active sensemaking, enacting order into puzzling situations, shaped by affordances and constraints in the environment. Noticing and bracketing selected cues in an ongoing flow is an enactment process to ambiguity and equivocality that starts to order the puzzling situation through framing. However, the surplus of meaning needs further pruning and reduction through selection that extracts particular cues by means of retrospective attention, preference and salience of the cues. Some form of articulation of the filtered resultant meanings into a plausible story is necessary before it can be retained by the organisation. In this way, a reciprocal relationship between organising and sensemaking emerges where "people organize to make sense of equivocal inputs and enact this sense back into the world to make that world more orderly" (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld 2005, p. 414).

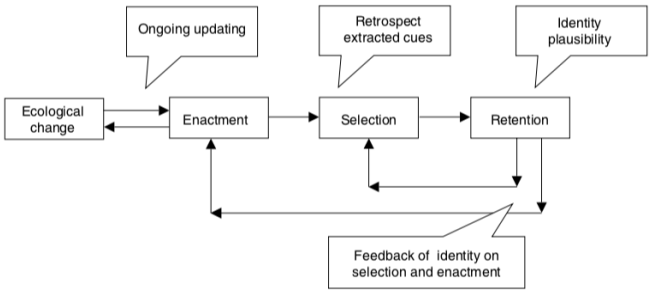

Figure 21: The ESR model of the organisational sensemaking process from (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld 2005, p. 414).

2.4 Status of organisational sensemaking in organisation inquiry

2.4.1 Weick's influence on the field

Weick is a tremendously influential theorist and management author. His career coincided with a resurgent interest in agency (and therefore cognition and sensemaking) in the field (Magala 1997) and he certainly helped to shape the focus of the entire field as a theorist and his roles as editor and board member. He was the editor of the journal *Administrative Science Quarterly* from 1977–1985 and before that associate editor of the journal *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance* from 1971–1977. He received awards from the Academy of Management for distinguished scholarly contributions and was bestowed the best article of the year award by the Academy of Management Review. His publication metrics,[17] as shown below, puts him among the highest profile scholars in organisation and management fields with a long (almost 60 years) and prolific (over 500 publications) career, that was also tremendously influential with a hundred papers cited at least a hundred times:

Citation years: 58 (1960-2018)

Papers: 515

Citations: 132041 (total); 2276.57 (per year)

Citations/paper: 256.39 (*count=62)

Citations/author: 108504.64

Papers/author: 433.79

Authors/paper: 1.44/1.0/1 (mean/median/mode)

Age-weighed citation rate: 12007.10 (sqrt=109.58), 10734.21/author

[17]These metrics were derived from Google Scholar data on query date 2018/04/27 10:05:39 AM using Publish or Perish software.

Hirsch h-index: 100 (a=13.20, m=1.72, 126755 cites=96.0% coverage)

Egghe g-index: 363 (g/h=3.63, 132025 cites=100.0% coverage)

PoP hI: 91 (normal); 1.57 (annual)

His most influential works in descending order are the following:

- K.E. Weick (1995) *Sensemaking in organizations*, cited by 22312 (970.09* per year).
- K.E. Weick (2015) *The social psychology of organizing*, cited by 19280 (6426.67* per year).
- K.E. Weick (1976) "Educational organizations as loosely coupled systems." *Administrative Science Quarterly*, cited by 9147 (217.79* per year).
- R.L. Daft, K.E. Weick (1984) "Toward a model of organizations as interpretation systems." *Academy of Management Review*, cited by 6737 (198.15* per year).
- K.E. Weick, K.H. Roberts (1993) "Collective mind in organizations: Heedful interrelating on flight decks." *Administrative Science Quarterly*, cited by 5043 (201.72* per year).
- K.E. Weick, K.M. Sutcliffe, D. Obstfeld (2005) "Organizing and the process of sensemaking." *Organization Science*, cited by 4877 (375.15* per year).

Anderson (2006) did a citation analysis of Weick's book *The Social Psychology of Organizing* in the three most influential organisation science journals, namely *Academy of Management Review*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, and *Organization Studies*. In addition to counting citations, they also conducted a content analysis of the articles that cite Weick. Their findings show that Weick has been incredibly influential and—since there were very few articles that aimed to refute aspects of Weick's work and

even fewer that involved empirical testing of his concepts—his views were largely uncritically accepted by the field (Anderson 2006, p. 1686).

Weick's influence is underscored by Anderson's review of similar studies into his influence:

> Ramos-Rodriguez and Ruiz-Navarro (2004) found that *The Social Psychology of Organizing* was the 24th most cited work in strategic management (cited in 61 of 870 articles in Strategic Management Journal between 1980 and 2000). Miner (2003) surveyed 95 scholars who gave Weick's work on the social psychology of organizing and sensemaking a mean importance rating of 5.51 out of 7—a higher mean importance rating than that given to all but six of the 73 dominant theories of organizational behavior. (Anderson 2006, p. 1676)

According to Kilduff and Mehra (1997, p. 464) a lot of research done in the field of sensemaking is postmodern in character. Kilduff refers to Weick's own overview of the state of sensemaking research (Weick 1995, pp. 171–181). The studies mentioned by Weick in his overview cover the range from weak to strong constructionism which seems to resonate with Kilduff's assessment of a postmodernist trend in organisational research, but of course it could be that Weick attributes the label "sensemaking research" to some authors who might choose different labels themselves. Van Maanen (1995) also identified a Weickean style, which many followers try to emulate, that challenges the traditional style of scientific reporting. Weick was certainly influential in establishing a particular approach to studying and writing about organisations.

However, when looking closely at the body of empirical research on organisational sensemaking, it is clear that many of Weick's followers employ research methods and research designs that fit poorly with the constructivist ontology implied by sensemaking theory. Allard-Poesi studied the methodological approaches used by researchers working with sensemaking as a theoretical starting point. She made the startling discovery that, "although departing from the structuro-functionalist approach of conventional

cognitive theories, research on sensemaking processes nonetheless aims to establish 'objective' knowledge on sensemaking" (Allard-Poesi 2005, p. 190). In other words, many of the researchers using Weick's theory do not consider sensemaking processes as intended by Weick. If Allard-Poesi is correct, the vast majority of scholars attempting empirical research within the framework of sensemaking theory settle for an "objectivist interpretivism".[18] The kind of interpretations these writers come up with seem to be the kind of interpretations that Weick wanted to steer clear of with his concept of sensemaking.[19]

2.4.2 Reception of organisational sensemaking

Weick is widely regarded as a visionary in organisation studies circles (Eisenberg 2006; Gioia 2006; Czarniawska 2005; Czarniawska 2006). At the time when Weick established himself the field was dominated by rationalist ideas from administration science. When seen against this backdrop, Weick's research interest in equivocality and ambiguity in organisations was revolutionary. Gioia (2006, p. 1710) explains that Weick changed the conversation regarding interpretivism in organisations.

> On one occasion he appeared to equate sensemaking with interpretation (personal communication concerning the pre-publication draft of the 1995 book), but soon realized how that depiction diminished the scope of sensemaking, so he rethought it. The distinction between these two big ideas, sensemaking and interpretation, is significant because it preserves the important notion that sensemaking subsumes interpretation, i.e. interpretation is but a step in the more encompassing process of sensemaking, because sensemaking accounts for action (and more

[18] Objectivist interpretivism bears a close resemblance to the classical hermeneutic school that will be introduced in the next chapter and contrasted with philosophical hermeneutics.

[19] In a later chapter, I will argue that the incomplete appropriation of Weick's ideas into an ontology alien to it, was made possible because Weick lacked the theoretical resources to explicate his implied ontology properly. The later analysis will focus on the muddled way in which sensemaking and interpretation was distinguished by Weick.

> importantly treats action as a constituent part of the process). The result is a stronger statement of the power of a sensemaking perspective. (Gioia 2006, p. 1720)

Coming from social psychology, the early Weick had a primary focus on the nature and structure of collective action, whilst the later Weick focuses more on making sense of equivocal situations.

Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2005, pp. 417–418) look towards the future of sensemaking research: from sensemaking to adaptive sensemaking; from micro sensemaking to micro-meso-macro sensemaking, from disabled to enabled sensemaking. They see many ways in which sensemaking can be further developed: "institutionalization, distributed sensemaking, power, and emotion to illustrate a few of the many ways in which present thinking about sensemaking might be enhanced" (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld 2005, p. 417). In addition they believe that the sensemaking perspective has much to offer organisation theory:

> Analyses of sensemaking provide (1) a micro-mechanism that produces macro-change over time; (2) a reminder that action is always just a tiny bit ahead of cognition, meaning that we act our way into belated understanding; (3) explication of predecisional activities; (4) description of one means by which agency alters institutions and environments (enactment); (5) opportunities to incorporate meaning and mind into organizational theory; (6) counterpoint to the sharp split between thinking and action that often gets invoked in explanations of organizational life (e.g., planners versus doers); (7) background for an attention-based view of the firm; (8) a balance between prospect in the form of anticipation and retrospect in the form of resilience; (9) reinterpretation of breakdowns as occasions for learning rather than as threats to efficiency; and (10) grounds to treat plausibility, incrementalism, improvisation, and bounded rationality as sufficient to guide goal-directed behavior. (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld 2005, p. 419)

The sensemaking approach to organisation has been subject to a fair bit of criticism, both from the neo-institutional mainstream—that considers isomorphism the real problem to be explained in organisations, criticises sensemaking for weak empirical support, and a naivety regarding larger contextual forces that impact organisation—and from emanicipatory and postmodern perspectives bemoaning sensemaking theory's lack of critical character, what they deem to be a perversion of proper social construction, and a lack of reflexivity.

An oft repeated criticism of Weick is that sensemaking theory does not take power and politics seriously—by extension that Weick is not critical enough of the status quo (Maitlis and Christianson 2014; Mills, Thurlow, and Mills 2010). Of course Weick does talk about control in organisations, but he does so in a neutral way. He makes distinctions between different orders of control, with direct supervision as first order control, system feedback control as the second order, and self-control, based on norms and premises, as the third order of control (Weick 1995, pp. 113–118). However, this way of talking about control takes no issue with the political nature of control and people invested in an emancipatory perspective on coercive institutions will take Weick to task for his neutrality. In fact, Weick's argument about premise controls is seen as a recipe for how the sense made by framing from premises can be used by management as third-order controls forming a self-imposed psychic prison.

A related point is that sensemaking theory is not a proper constructionist position.[20] The typical criticism from a constructionist perspective centres on a discomfort with Weick's hybridisation of social construction by adding elements from cognitive dissonance theory. The result is an emphasis on the role of retrospective rationalisation as an important ingredient of the sensemaking recipe, prompting the charge that instead of 'proper' social construction, sensemaking is about the rationalisation of results, rather than producing those results. Weick could argue against this

[20]This is similar to the point I make later in section 4.6 about sensemaking being a special form of constructionism, because it is rooted in positivist research and uncritical regarding the result of the construction.

criticism that it fails to take into account the mutual influence of action- and belief-driven sensemaking. Retrospective rationalisation is but one way of achieving meaningful coherence and is augmented with enactment.

A meta-level criticism is that sensemaking theory is not self-reflexive and that it does not apply its statements about the nature of social reality to itself. Allard-Poesi (2005, p. 183) notes the "paradox of sensemaking" as an approach that takes as its subject matter the subjective experiences and interactions of organisational participants actively constructing organisational reality, yet researchers regard their engagement with that subject matter as objective. Allard-Poesi (2005, p. 183) see two contradictions in the field of sensemaking research: in the first instance, researchers view their subjects as actively constructing their organisational worlds, yet believe themselves able to "disengage from that experience and grasp it", and in the second instance, the researchers define social reality as fluid and indeterminate, yet rely on systematic methods for identifying regularities in that social world. In response to this Allard-Poesi calls for a "re-engagement" with sensemaking processes also in the research approach so that "[s]tudying sensemaking becomes an active, purposeful and intersubjective sensemaking process in itself" (Allard-Poesi 2005, p. 183).[21]

Neo-institutionalists have a different set of reservations about sensemaking theory. Chief among these is their insistence that isomorphism is the great riddle of organisation and that whilst Weick's concept of enactment is useful for studying change in organisations, it is not useful for explaining stability over time (Jennings and Greenwood 2003, p. 195). Weber and Glynn (2006) claim that Weick's organisational sensemaking theory neglects the role of larger social and historical contexts. They proceed to outline the ways in which institutions constrain sensemaking by influencing the likelihood of particular actions and prohibiting others. With this as background they revisit the various sensemaking processes and describe them within their institutional contexts.

[21] Allard-Poesi's criticism seems naive in view of the fact that the paradox of an objective science of subjective experiences goes right back to Weber and Dilthey and the idea of a social science itself. Historically the solution that Allard-Poesi proposes of essentially collapsing into subjectivity has been deemed a recapitulation to be avoided.

2.5 Conclusion

With the term organisational sensemaking, Weick systematised and gave theoretical respectability to interpretivist responses to population ecology, transaction costs, and neo-institutionalism in organisation studies. However, the empirical program of the sensemaking perspective is relatively under-developed compared to that of neo-institutionalism. This situation is worsened by the observation that many of the empirical studies based on sensemaking situate Weick's ideas in a larger framework that do not agree with the ontological departure point of sensemaking theory.

To properly evaluate Weick's contribution, one has to distinguish between organisational sensemaking as a particular theory, as a broad approach or perspective, and as an organisational phenomenon. Weick offers a theory of organising that he calls organisational sensemaking. As we've seen in this chapter, this theory a a bit of a moving target as it was restated and elaborated over time. Originally it started as a theory of enactment and the micro-interactionist foundations of emergent organisation; over time the emphasis moved to more cognitive and interpretive aspects of organisation, and in its latest formulation it is more closely aligned with emotions and other non-rational elements in organising.

Organisational sensemaking is also a perspective on, or an approach to, organising. As we saw in the reviews of Weick's influence on the field, many scholars take a sensemaking perspective on organisational phenomena, but few of them use Weick's theory in a canonical way, preferring to use selected parts of it for their particular purposes. There are also scholars that do not explicitly use a sensemaking perspective, but who is considered by Weick (and others at the core of the sensemaking school) to be engaged with sensemaking research. Because they share certain affinities and approaches to research these writers are appropriated by the sensemaking perspective, without overtly using sensemaking theory. One of the problems with evaluating Weick's contribution is that he reinterprets many of his influences in terms of his own language. In other words, he would be referring to, for example, Perrow (1983) or Simon (1973) as if they were

also using a sensemaking perspective, whilst their views are antecedents to sensemaking theory. To some degree this is of course a matter of style: Weick's style is to "read through" these thinkers with his own sensemaking frame, however it does matter in places where he glosses over aspects of others' theories that do not fit his purposes so neatly.[22]

Lastly organisational sensemaking is also an organisational phenomenon that can be studied (in principle also with theories other than organisational sensemaking), because it gained a life independent of the theory or perspective and became a label for certain behaviours observable in the world.

Weick is sometimes guilty of confusing these three things, one example being his tendency to report on the work of other authors (many of whom were doing their research long before he came up with sensemaking theory), as if they are proceeding from his statement of the theory. Rhetorically it works as a claim to authority, but in actuality it points to the phenomenon under study, rather than the specific approach of study. By not keeping these three things apart, Weick indiscriminately incorporates various concepts into his theory of organisational sensemaking, often in ways that ignore the originating theories and contexts of these concepts. In the end organisational sensemaking theory is a conglomerate of concepts held together by the metaphor of framing and the idea that enactment influences such framing.

I showed in this chapter that the heart of sensemaking theory is the enactment-selection-retention (ESR) cycle, although it leaves out many aspects of the mature sensemaking theory. In the mature statement of the theory a central metaphor is that of framing and of frame + cues + connection as a minimal sensible structure. Together these do not yet address the problem of sensemaking at the level of organising and here the movement between intersubjective and generic subjective sense is important to

[22] As will be shown in chapter 4, Basbøll (2010) took Weick to task about this aspect of his treatment of Mailloux (1990) An example from earlier in this chapter was the way in which the concept of levels by Wiley (1988) was appropriated by Weick (1995) to explain the connection between individual and organisational levels of sensemaking. Later analyses in chapter 4 will show that this was also the case with Weick's reinterpretation of Porac, Thomas, and Baden-Fuller (1989) as if the study at Hawick was an instance of sensemaking research.

Weick's argument. However, my analysis of the ontology of levels showed that this aspect remains under-theorised by Weick. The action- and belief-driven processes describe various behaviours by which framing happens in organisational settings, but these descriptions fall short of an integrated analytical core theory of organisational sensemaking.

Chapter 3

Hermeneutics

3.1 Background

Historically, hermeneutics was the art and practice of the interpretation in classical philology and the sub-discipline of exegesis in theology. Hermeneutics focused on difficult texts whose meaning is not easily accessible because they are ancient and the current readers were not the immediate intended audience at the time of writing. Typically the authors of these texts are unknown (and therefore their intention is not available to help readers to understand their texts and reconstructing that intention is nigh impossible), the texts are complex and from a different historical epoch and for these reasons difficult to understand, furthermore religious and judicial texts are embedded in larger traditions maintained by a community of readers or practitioners that provide a particular interpretive scope. For these reasons the special art of hermeneutics is required to render texts of this kind comprehensible and, especially in the case of religious or judicial texts, to guide the application of the meaning derived by means of the interpretive principles.

However, over time hermeneutics became a philosophical method as a result of the shift from a focus on difficult classic or authoritative texts to all kinds of texts, literary texts in particular. In a further shift the model of text interpretation was taken as the foundation for the interpretation of

all kinds of cultural artefacts and eventually of social action (for instance in psychoanalysis or interpretive sociology). In a parallel shift, those following Heidegger took hermeneutics to be a philosophical departure point (in other words as an ontology, instead of an epistemology).[1]

For much of this chapter we'll be looking to the past at a time when hermeneutics counted among the dominant perspectives for understanding the social world—a position from which it has since lost considerable ground to both neo-positivist and postmodern (post-structuralist) perspectives.

The first section provides the historical background needed to appreciate the nature of hermeneutic approaches as well as the central controversy in the field. In broad strokes various foundational figures are summarised, namely Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Betti, Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur. These writers by no means exhaust the entire field, but they represent the shifts by which hermeneutics moved from philology and theology to a general theory of interpretation first of cultural expressions of all kinds, then to a defining perspective of the human sciences, reaching its zenith as an interpretive science, and finally to a general philosophical departure point.

After Gadamer a multitude of controversies and associated distinctions between types of hermeneutics litter the history of the field, however the focus is here on the one distinction that matters for the later critique of sensemaking theory's foundations, namely that between hermeneutics as a technique for interpretation and hermeneutics as a philosophical perspective on understanding. The second section is devoted to the difference between these two hermeneutics by revisiting an old controversy between Betti and Hirsch, who argued for a strict classical hermeneutics, and Gadamer and

[1] As will be seen later, classical hermeneutics represent the shift from the interpretation of anonymous religious texts to the interpretation of all texts with known authors. The next chapter will use the distinctions from this chapter to show that when referring to interpretation, Weick has in mind only this shift of classical hermeneutics. What Weick presents as sensemaking, is closely related to the second shift to the interpretation of human action via the interpretive sociology and social psychology that were antecedents to Weick's theory. However, Weick seems ignorant of the third shift to philosophical hermeneutics and underestimates hermeneutic theorisation of the phenomenon of understanding.

Ricoeur, who insisted on philosophical hermeneutics. Ricoeur, who is firmly rooted in the philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer, tried to incorporate some of the concerns from Betti and Hirsch about Gadamer's supposed relativism, as well as those of Habermas about Gadamer's supposed lack of critical perspective. Ricoeur, not only offers a partial integration of many controversies in the field, but he also demonstrates how the areas of action, narrative, and identity—areas of interest shared by sensemaking theory and therefore significant for the later analyses of Weick—can be approached from the standpoint of philosophical hermeneutics.

The last section establishes the current status of hermeneutics as a meta-theoretical perspective in social research in general and as an approach used in organisational research in particular. It will be shown that hermeneutics might have a lot to offer the study of organisations, but that it is not widely accepted, nor well-established—it is argued that on the whole hermeneutics is reduced to mere method in the study of organisations.

3.2 Early hermeneutic thinkers

3.2.1 Schleiermacher: general hermeneutics

Schleiermacher expanded the scope of hermeneutics beyond classical philology by creating a general hermeneutics (*allgemeine Hermeneutik*), originally intended to go beyond the interpretation of sacred ancient texts to include the interpretation of all texts. Madison (1994, p. 290) observes that by opening up hermeneutics to include texts beyond the ancient texts of philology and theology, Schleiermacher opened the field up to the interpretation of all works of art (*Kunstlehre*) and the interpretation of cultural expression in general. Schleiermacher's aim was to provide principles for guiding understanding, rather than reflecting on the nature of understanding itself. He saw the limits of philologic techniques that they only reveal the text on the level of language—the "grammatical" level (Bleicher 1980, p. 15). He regarded this as unsatisfactory, because these levels reveal little regarding the reasons the text was created in the first place—those things

that presumably contain the conditions for the text's existence, its content, and its particular form. To get at this deeper meaning, one has to engage the ideas that prompted the composition of the text and this requires reconstructing the author's insights. Engagement therefore has to take place at the generative level of the text—what he called the "psychological" or "divinatory" levels (Bleicher 1980, p. 15). Naturally the author of a text had to come to some sort of insight not given to his audience by a particular process and when we want to fully interpret the text, we need to retrace this process in reverse. The audience presumably had access to the same cultural resources as the author, yet did not achieve the same insight. However, the shared cultural resources make it possible for the audience to reconstruct the process by which the writer came to the insight. In this view, reading with understanding is the logical flip-side of writing with insight. Understanding is primarily achieved by situating oneself in the position of the author and imagining the intention and beliefs of the author through this psychological process. Therefore, the process of interpretation for Schleiermacher is the process of reconstructing the intended meaning of the author (Madison 1994, p. 291).

The hermeneutic circle in Schleiermacher operates as a back-and-forth movement between the linguistic and psychological levels (Howard 1982, p. 10). At the outset the reader is confronted with the text, which is only a linguistic fragment of the psychological world that gave the writer the insight to produce it, and it is up to the reader to "divine" the whole background to which this particular fragment belongs. The better the reader can reconstruct the whole, the better the fragment can be understood, which in turn will make an even better divination of the whole background world possible. In this way, we interpret the whole by an analysis of the parts and give meaning to the parts in terms of the whole. Schleiermacher's method confronts the issue of how and where to enter this circle, because how are we supposed to understand the parts-in-the-whole at the same time as the whole-in-the-parts? Successful interpretation needs an entry-point into the hermeneutic circle. Fortunately, one only needs a tiny foothold of some understanding of the whole to attain a sufficient initial overview of the text

and from there one can move onto a two-pronged analysis along the grammatical and psychological levels. As long as the results of these two deeper analyses match up, one can move forward confident of your understanding and only where there is some disparity does one need to apply oneself until the disagreement is resolved. In this way, Schleiermacher's hermeneutic circle becomes an ever-widening spiral along we keep going in until we are satisfied that we've grasped the intentions of the author.

3.2.2 Dilthey: hermeneutics and human sciences

Dilthey developed hermeneutics as the feature of the human sciences distinguishing it from the natural sciences. He worked with a distinction between two modes of inquiry: explanation (*Erklären*), which is appropriate for the natural sciences focused on causes, and understanding (*Verstehen*), which is appropriate for the human sciences focused on meanings (Madison 1994, p. 291). He argued that lived experiences (*Erlebnisse*) and their concomitant cultural expressions are the objects of understanding rather than explanation. In other words, the human sciences have a subject matter that differs from that of the natural sciences in ways that matter for the objective of scrutiny and consequently for the method by which that objective can be reached. Madison (1994, p. 291) explains how, similar to Schleiermacher, for Dilthey proper understanding requires the ability of the investigator to reproduce the life experiences that lie behind its expressions. For Dilthey the human sciences are only possible to the extent that life is a lived experience and to the extent that these experiences are partially captured in various cultural expressions that are open to being understood by us. The raw material for the human scientist are the various expressions (in the form of artefacts, texts, art, etc.), but these are just an entry point for achieving a deeper understanding of the lived experience that produced these expressions. The ability to see the world through the eyes of the other is the major skill required, because understanding requires reconstructing the generative life experience and this can only be achieved through a deep empathy. Dilthey describes this empathy as a moment of finding oneself in

the other.[2] In this respect Dilthey is following Schleiermacher, the shared humanity of the author and reader is the bridge that makes it possible for the reader to pass through to the author's ideas and intent. According to Howard (1982, p. 20), Dilthey widens Schleiermacher's hermeneutic circle by taking the part-whole-part analysis that Schleiermacher proposes for textual interpretation and applying it to the social world. Of all the expressions that are the parts from which we can reconstruct the whole of society, it is in linguistic expressions where cultural meanings primarily reside (Howard 1982, p. 21).

Dilthey presents this model of interpretation as the key to understanding what is distinctive about the human sciences. Whilst the natural sciences explain phenomena through uncovering the laws of nature governing it, the human sciences have to reconstruct human experiences through interpreting its cultural expressions. What we find in the human sciences is just a higher and more sophisticated form of the kind of connections between the external manifestations and their internal significance that we all learned as children through a process of cultural socialisation. Growing up, we simultaneously learn how to interpret other people's psychological inner states from their expressions and how to express our own inner state to them (Dilthey 1988, pp. 153–154).

Of course, when confronted with the much more complex issues that are the subject matter of the human sciences, we require far more skill and effort to re-imagine our own lived experience in a way that makes it possible to re-live another's experience and meaning—something that may prove very hard if that lived experience is from a different epoch or culture. Nonetheless, the human sciences are based on this model of understanding others and in principle this is possible through our common humanity and

[2] "Das Verstehen ist ein Wiederfinden des Ich im Du; der Geist findet sich auf immer höheren Stufen von Zusammenhang wieder; diese Selbigkeit des Geistes im Ich, im Du, in jedem Subjekt einer Gemeinschaft, in jedem System der Kultur, schließlich in der Totalität des Geistes und der Universalgeschichte macht das Zusammenwirken der verschiedenen Leistungen in den Geisteswissenschaften möglich. Das Subjekt des Wissens ist hier eins mit seinem Gegenstand, und dieser ist auf allen Stufen seiner Objektivationen derselbe" (Wilhelm Dilthey 1968 [1910]. *Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften*, Frankfurt/M., p. 235.

the regularities of the "objective mind" (Dilthey 1988, p. 161).

3.3 Gadamer: philosophical hermeneutics

Gadamer represents a watershed moment in the development of hermeneutics and for that reason his contribution warrants a closer look than the preceding theorists. We've seen the ancient origins of hermeneutics in text interpretation and how Schleiermacher developed a universal theory of interpretation that goes beyond philology by adding a psychological dimension to the interpretive task. Dilthey in turn widened this psychological reconstruction to include all cultural expressions and so established hermeneutic *Verstehen* as the defining characteristic of the human sciences. Betti[3] refined Dilthey's vision by removing the psychological dimension inherited from Schleiermacher, focusing on strategies for overcoming the usual barriers faced by interpreters, and providing techniques for various genres of texts.

3.3.0.1 Heidegger's influence

What separates Gadamer from these thinkers is the influence of Heidegger's philosophy. The most important prior insight needed for Gadamer's hermeneutics is Heidegger's notion of *aletheia*—interpretation as uncovering to reveal something that was hitherto hidden. Heidegger's thinks of understanding as the realisation of *Dasein*,[4] rather than just being a method for achieving understanding, hermeneutics is the fundamental mode of being. Said differently, for Heidegger, understanding is not cognitive content or some insight found in the mind, rather it is *to-be* or simply what we *are*—the most fundamental understanding is that of our potentiality (what we could *become*). Madison (1994, p. 300) explains that Heidegger

[3] Chronologically, Betti slightly precedes Gadamer, but his ideas (and those of his follower Hirsch) are best presented after those of Gadamer and Ricoeur.

[4] *Dasein* means 'being-there,' but in Heidegger it refers to the nature of human 'being-there' as an entity with self-reflective ability which makes its own 'being-there' into an existential problem.

considers interpretation (*Auslegung*) to be one such potentiality that belongs to understanding—the "laying out"[5] of that which is projected by our understanding—as that understanding is developed in an interpretive process. Heidegger (1988, p. 225) says: "Any interpretation which is to contribute understanding, must already have understood what is to be interpreted". From this follows that interpretation is not just a way to achieve meaning, it is rooted in a pre-understanding that makes the accomplishment of knowing possible.

Gadamer also uses the notion of a hermeneutic circle to explain how understanding occurs. However, he comes to the hermeneutic circle after Heidegger, who thought that a hermeneutic circle can only be a vicious circle and therefore resisted attempts to explain *Dasein* in terms of the image of a circle. Yet, when the circle does feature in his work it is the circle between understanding (*Verstehen*) and the act of interpreting that understanding (*Auslegung*)—the circle exist in the question of whether our understanding is just the process of confirming our initial suppositions. The paradox that Heidegger wants to get to is that all understanding is coloured by our pre-understanding—an insight that becomes Gadamer's departure point. For Gadamer the interpreter presupposed at the outset that the text is coherent, complete, and meaningful. This presupposition is a precondition for entering the hermeneutic circle where the interpreter can consider both his own prejudices and the prejudices in the text.

3.3.0.2 The rehabilitation of prejudices

Gadamer follows Heidegger in this notion of understanding as a matter of *Sein* rather than *Bewußtsein*—situating the hermeneutic problem in ontology rather than epistemology. Heidegger's analysis of the fore-structures of understanding helps Gadamer (2004, pp. 277–297) to rehabilitate "prejudices" (*Vorurteile* is what he calls presuppositions), from a source of error to be overcome, to their important role in structuring of our pre-understanding. Whilst natural science attempts to strip itself of all prej-

[5]The German word *Auslegung* also means to 'lay out' or to 'unpack' in addition to interpreting.

udice in search of objectivity, Gadamer sees this as an impossible illusion and argues that prejudices are necessary to reach any understanding at all.[6] The difficulty (and the hermeneutic task) is to distinguish between those prejudices which cloud our understanding and carry the risk of misunderstanding, and the relevant prejudices that are necessary for coming to an understanding and hold the promise for genuine understanding. Unfortunately it is impossible for finite beings like ourselves to definitively separate the true from the false prejudices, but through experience, we can learn which of our prejudices lead us to error. On this journey to improved understanding we are helped by the passing of time and by dialogic engagement. We also have access to tradition as a source of legitimation of some prejudices as they are refined by our predecessors through hindsight and dialogue.

In turning to Dilthey's concern with the character of the human sciences, Gadamer argues that truth is not fully grasped through the scientific method, but also belong to aesthetic or linguistic spheres of experience with their own avenues toward grasping truth. The three parts of *Truth and Method* are devoted to each of these three conceptions of truth in turn as Gadamer seeks to show that truth transcends (scientific) method. Gadamer's argument about truth and method is not anti-method, but argues against a scientistic preoccupation with method over judgement. Gadamer is arguing against *any* method seeing itself as epistemology by insisting that the right application of the method is sufficient to meet the conditions of truth (Howard 1982, p. 122). Madison (1988, p. 28) explains this preoccupation of positivist science with methodology in this way: "one has only to learn the method itself, in and for itself; it is an intellectual technique. Having done so, one has only to apply it to whatever subject matter one chooses; the only criterion in applying the method is *correctness* of application…one's guide is the method itself, not the subject matter to which it is applied" In contrast to this technical sense of method, philosophical hermeneutics supports a normative sense of method as part of practical

[6]Weick's frames function similarly; simultaneously illuminating some insights and obscuring others.

reasoning where method is a means to support judgement "far from supplanting personal, subjective judgment, or eliminating the need for it, is meant as an aid to good judgment" (Madison 1988, p. 28). In other words, the disclosing of truth is not merely the outcome of the application of a particular technique, but is the consequence of something that "happens to us over and above our wanting and doing" (Gadamer 2004, p. xvi).

Gadamer's eventual goal is a general description of understanding, but his strategy is to start from particular types of experience, namely aesthetic, historical and linguistic, and consider understanding afresh from those perspectives, before turning to experience as such. The reason for this strategy is that aesthetic and historical experience in particular proved to be mostly beyond the grasp of scientific method. He develops various models of understanding that he considers appropriate for each of the types of experience and then derives his general description of the event of understanding from those.

3.3.1 Experience of art

The first part of *Truth and Method*, "The question of truth as it emerges in the experience of art" (Gadamer 2013, pp. 1–168) argues for an interplay between the subjectivity of the work of art and the subjectivity of the person experiencing the work as art. To see the work of art as a mere perceptual object does not take into account the capability of the work of art to express itself, which means that the moment a work is experienced by someone, it ceases to be just an object as it becomes a subject representing an experience in the experience of the engaged observer. Furthermore, when confronted with a work of art, our aesthetic experience is enhanced by our engagement with the tradition of aesthetic appreciation or criticism that makes the aesthetic object understandable.

Gadamer relies on a revised concept of play[7] as the model for the experience of art—revised, because over against the subjective meaning of play in the romantic tradition, Gadamer wants to show that play in the experience

[7] *Spiel* in German means play, but can refer to a game or a theatre play.

of art "means neither the orientation nor even the state of mind of the creator or of those enjoying the work of art, nor the freedom of a subjectivity engaged in play, but the mode of being of the work of art itself" (Gadamer 2004, p. 102). He distinguishes between play and the behaviour of the players and notes that the subjective reflection of the player is not helpful in understanding what play is, because "[p]lay fulfills its purpose only if the player loses himself in play" (Gadamer 2004, p. 103). The answer as to what play is, has to be sought in the mode of being of play itself.

> The real subject of the game (this is shown in precisely those experiences in which there is only a single player) is not the player but instead the game itself. What holds the player in its spell, draws him into play, and keeps him there is the game itself. (Gadamer 2004, p. 106)

This realisation that play has its own essence, independent from the subjectivities of the participants, then become the model for aesthetic experience, because the work of art is not merely an object in our subjective reflection; when properly engaged with, the work of art becomes the experience—one that may move or change the person touched by the work (Gadamer 2004, p. 103), in some cases causing that person to see not only the work afresh, but the entire world in a new light.

> [T]he being of art cannot be defined as an object of an aesthetic consciousness because…the aesthetic attitude is more than it knows of itself. It is a part of the event of being that occurs in presentation, and belongs essentially to play as play. (Gadamer 2004, p. 115)

Of course the work delineates the issue, but the work is not meaningful art until an interpreter joins in the game: the person appreciating the art work becomes an active participant and only through this engagement does the meaning come about.

3.3.2 Experience of tradition

The second part of *Truth and Method* is called "The extension of the question of truth to understanding in the human sciences" (Gadamer 2013, pp. 179–387), and consists of an analysis of the relationship between history and hermeneutics as well as the role of a "historically effected consciousness" in understanding. In this section Gadamer critiques the ideas of Schleiermacher's romantic hermeneutics and Dilthey's hermeneutics as the basis for human sciences. Gadamer (2013, p. 243) considers history a difficult problem for both romantic hermeneutics and for Dilthey. In the case of Dilthey, he thought one could conceive of history as a text, but this produces a reductionist view of history as intellectual history (Gadamer 2013, pp. 242–243). Gadamer (2013, p. 243) points out that in the final analysis, the procedure Dilthey proposes for deciphering the past like a text does not grasp historical experience fully. After presenting this historical background, Gadamer is in a position to derive some hermeneutic principles regarding historicality, prejudices, and the hermeneutic circle.

Gadamer (2013, p. 284) describes how prejudice was discredited by the Enlightenment and against this maintains that "the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being" (Gadamer 2013, p. 289). Casting prejudices as the very conditions of understanding, Gadamer (2013, pp. 289–296) considers the role of tradition and authority in cultivating prejudices that are useful for illumination rather than distortion. Whilst the Enlightenment frequently juxtaposed authority and thinking for oneself, Gadamer (2013, p. 293) argues that there is no "unconditional antithesis between tradition and reason …[because] …[e]ven the most genuine and pure tradition does not persist because of […] inertia. It needs to be affirmed, embraced, cultivated". Madison (1994, p. 251) points out that Gadamer's rehabilitation of prejudice hinges on his emphasis on the role of tradition and that he effectively locates authority in tradition. Gadamer uses the example of how some works become considered classics to demonstrate the power of history, tradition, and authority. The notion of a classic work would be impossible without a fertile substrate

in the cultural consciousness (Gadamer 2013, p. 309). The implication for hermeneutics is then that "[u]nderstanding is to be thought of less as a subjective act than as participating in an event of tradition, a process of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated" (Gadamer 2013, p. 302).

3.3.2.1 Historically effected consciousness

While awareness of how history works through us can be achieved, it is not that easy to recognise how we participate in it: "In fact history does not belong to us; we belong to it" (Gadamer 2013, pp. 288–289). One of the effects of history is that it helps us to achieve distance from our interpretations, because the passing of time helps interpreters to eliminate errors and to uncover potential meanings that were not considered at first glance.

> Often temporal distance can solve the question of critique in hermeneutics, namely how to distinguish the true prejudices, by which we *understand*, from the *false* ones, by which we *misunderstand*. Hence the hermeneutically trained mind will also include historical consciousness. It will make conscious the prejudices governing our own understanding, so that the text, as another's meaning, can be isolated and valued on its own. (Gadamer 2013, pp. 309–310)

We do not come to most of our prejudices on our own, perhaps the majority of our prejudices are the result of cultural socialisation. Furthermore, as self-aware beings we have an idea of the extent to which we are both enabled and constrained by our own culture and tradition. Gadamer calls this awareness a *wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein*, which is usually translated as "effective-historical consciousness" or as "historically effected consciousness" to show that it is a "consciousness exposed to the effects of

history"[8] in the sense that it is affected by history in general, but also that it is a "historical self-consciousness" in the sense that it is self-aware that it is also the result of (effected by) a particular history (Gadamer 2013, p. xiv).

Dialogue is the model for understanding historical experience, the goal of this dialogue is to come to agreement (to understand each other) regarding the subject matter. Grondin (2002) points to three connotations of Gadamer's notion of "understanding", namely understanding as an intellectual grasp (*epistēmē*), understanding as practical know-how (*technē* and phrónēsis), and understanding as agreement (*Verständigung, sich verstehen*). The third connotation is one of understanding each other or coming to an understanding, where understanding is to agree on the issue—the thing itself (*die Sache selbst*). It is this connotation that informs Gadamer's image of the fusion of horizons and his dialogical model, because agreement is reached through a process of dialogue.

This dialogical model of understanding holds for whatever is interpreted. In the case of texts:

> Gadamer holds that interpretation of the text cannot in principle be limited merely to what the author intended or how his own time understood him. The text is not an expression of the subjectivity of the author (WM 372-373). Rather, the text only comes into real existence in a dialogue of the interpreter with the text, and the situation of the interpreter is an important condition of the understanding of the text. (Hoy 1982, p. 52)

The wellspring of meaning is not, as in the case of the romantic hermeneutists, found in the creative insight of the writer, necessitating an empathetic reconstruction of that insight by the reader. Instead the wellspring of meaning—if it is to be found somewhere—is in the hermeneutic encounter

[8] Ricoeur (1975, pp. 98–99) translated *wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein* this way in the following passage: "Consciousness as exposed to the effects of history, which makes total reflection on prejudices impossible and precedes every objectification of the past by the historian".

itself. Gadamer characterises the hermeneutic encounter as the border between two horizons of understanding; understanding proceeds as the border is gradually removed by a fusion of horizons.

3.3.2.2 Fusion of horizons

Gadamer's departure point in the finitude of our existence, means that our understanding also has limitations. Gadamer (2013, p. 313) invokes the concept of 'horizon' to capture this limit to our insight. Gadamer applies this visual metaphor to understanding: Our horizon is the vanishing point of our vision from a particular standpoint, but of course as we move from where we stand, the horizon moves further too and makes it possible to see more or differently. He uses the example of conversation (Gadamer 2013, p. 314) to illustrate the various ways reaching the horizon of the other can be thought of. He argues that conversations where we simply want to get to know the other person only leads to the discovery of the other's horizon, because one can get to know someone without agreeing with that person (Gadamer 2013, p. 314). In this case one might get to know the person, but at the same time fail to understand what that person is saying. However, conversation seeking to establish agreement on some issue is not enough to merely reach the horizon of the other, one's own horizon should move to meet it. In fact, in the case of establishing agreement it is wrong to think of two horizons, we should think of horizons fused into one great horizon (Gadamer 2013, p. 315).

> The historical movement of human life consists in the fact that it is never absolutely bound to any one standpoint, and hence can never have a truly closed horizon. The horizon is, rather, something into which we move and that moves with us. Horizons change for a person who is moving. Thus the horizon of the past, out of which all human life lives and which exists in the form of tradition, is always in motion. The surrounding horizon is not set in motion by historical consciousness. But in it this motion becomes aware of itself [...] Everything contained in his-

> torical consciousness is in fact embraced by a single historical horizon. Our own past and that other past toward which our historical consciousness is directed help to shape this moving horizon out of which human life always lives and which determines it as heritage and tradition. (Gadamer 2013, p. 315)

Given that we have inherited our prejudices from our predecessors and that we also know that this is the case, understanding happens at that point where we expand the horizon of our understanding to also encompass the horizon of the past that is projected forward through time. Whilst the horizon of the past is projected toward the present, the horizon of the present is also dynamic rather than static. The horizon of the present is constantly updated as our prejudices are tested by every encounter with the projected past (Gadamer 2013, p. 317). Updating of the present horizon depends on encounters with both the past horizon and the horizon of our tradition mediated by effective history, thus "the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past" (Gadamer 2013, p. 317). From this perspective, isolated closed-off horizons are impossible and instead "understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves" (Gadamer 2013, p. 317). A living tradition sustains a continual process of fusion of horizons combining past and present in meaningful ways.

Gadamer (2004, p. 271) insists that we should be open to the meaning of the other or of the work. This openness does not mean that we forego our own pre-understanding, it includes "situating the other meaning in relation to the whole of our own meanings or ourselves in relation to it" (Gadamer 2004, p. 271). When it comes to the interpretation of a text, the reader should be open to the text and its message, especially when that message calls the reader's prejudices and pre-understanding into question. This is to allow the text to speak to the reader in a fusion between the horizon of the text and the reader's (now expanded) horizon. Taylor (2002, p. 138) notes the dangers of ethnocentrism, because it is all too easy to make too quick sense of a text or of another—to interpret what is new and different on one's own terms. The notion of the fusion of horizons implies that meaning cannot

be achieved without moving one's own horizon too. This implies that to understand the other is to understand yourself differently too. In addition, since the fusion of horizons consists of a continual mediation between two poles, there cannot be "one right interpretation" (Hoy 1982, p. 52).

3.3.3 Experience of speaking

The third part of *Truth and Method* is called "The ontological shift of hermeneutics guided by language" (Gadamer 2013, pp. 399–506) and it describes the linguistic nature of understanding which he calls 'linguisticality' (*Sprachlichkeit*). The finitude of our existence makes it impossible to fully transcend human experience. Gadamer's notion of linguisticality makes the point that "the object of human science is always and everywhere mediated through culture, self-understanding, and language" (Taylor 2002, p. 129). Furthermore, the awareness of our own finitude and the historicity of our own viewpoint should engender an openness to new and different points of view.

3.3.3.1 Linguisticality

Language is the vehicle for understanding: "All understanding is interpretation, and all interpretation takes place in the medium of a language that allows the object to come into words and yet is at the same time the interpreterâ s own language" (Gadamer 2013, p. 407). We achieve our consciousness of the effects of history through our engagement with the world and the hermeneutic experience of that engagement happens in and through language. Not only are the experiences we attempt to understand mediated by language, we also employ linguistic interpretive tools during this effort. "The linguisticality of understanding is the concretion of historically effected consciousness" (Gadamer 2013, p. 407). The linguisticality of understanding underscores the fact that languages structures our understanding. This is unavoidable, since both the world and our interpretive tools are linguistically mediated. Language and understanding are so tightly coupled that this linguistically often goes unnoticed. Only when we come

up against the limits of our linguistic ability, do we notice how language mediates our understanding.

> Verbal interpretation is the form of all interpretation, even when what is to be interpreted is not linguistic in nature—i.e., is not a text but a statue or a musical composition. We must not let ourselves be confused by forms of interpretation that are not verbal but in fact presuppose language. (Gadamer 2013, pp. 416–417)

Translation provides the model for understanding guided by language. One can be said to understand when one can translate the past into the present. Just like a translator expresses the meanings from one language in another, an interpreter 'translates' the meaning from the historical context so that it can be understood in the present context. What is being historically effected is the fusion of the horizon of the past with the horizon of the present. The translator's craft demonstrates the unity between interpretation and application.[9]

At this point we can reflect on the linguisticality of the concepts Gadamer introduced earlier. Our prejudices and the tradition that handed them down to us are both linguistic in nature. The hermeneutic event "consists in the coming into language of what has been said in the tradition: an event that is at once appropriation and interpretation" (Gadamer 2013, p. 479). Returning to his starting point about the inevitable role of prejudice in any understanding, Gadamer (2013, p. 479) can now explain that "it is literally more correct to say that language speaks us, rather than that we speak it".

During our engagement we proceed in a speculative manner (Gadamer 2013, p. 481), since particular interpretations only partially disclose the meaning of the work and each time we are forced to reconsider our conjectures provides opportunity for the work "to assert itself" allowing "an infinity of meaning to be represented [...] in a finite way" (Gadamer 2013, p. 481). The work invites *an* interpretation (not *the* interpretation) borne

[9]Gadamer's treatment of 'application' is explained in the next section.

from engagement with the work and our tradition challenged by the work. Our speculative strategy in trying out various interpretations is a function of the speculative nature of language: "That which can be understood is language. […] To come into language does not mean that a second being is acquired. Rather, what something presents itself as belongs to its own being" (Gadamer 2013, p. 491). Hermeneutics is universal because of the linguisticality of that which can be understood. Since we can only relate to the world through the medium of language, Gadamer (2013, p. 491) concludes—as a correction of Dilthey's view—that hermeneutics is a universal philosophy and not just the methodological approach of the human sciences.

3.3.3.2 Application

Understanding is also practical, Gadamer views application as the goal of hermeneutics (Gadamer 2013, p. 318). In its proto-form, hermeneutics distinguished between understanding, interpretation, and application. Gadamer shows how romantic hermeneutics came to the realisation that interpretation is just understanding explicated (Gadamer 2013, p. 318) and therefore interpretation is part of the structure of understanding.[10] The consequence of considering understanding and interpretation as part of the same problem, is that application became neglected as a hermeneutic issue (Gadamer 2013, p. 318) and considered to be something that comes after the hermeneutic question of meaning has been solved. As we'll see in the classical hermeneutics version, an interpreter first solves the problem of understanding and then decides what to do with the insight so achieved. However, for Gadamer meaning and application are not that easily separable. It is not a question of first understanding and then applying it to the world, rather application provides the context that guides understanding. This implies that future experiences can change (or correct) our

[10]This realisation that understanding is always interpretation and that our interpretive tools are part of the understanding is what leads Gadamer to language, the repository of interpretive tools, as central to hermeneutics—he refers to the ever-present mediation of meaning through language as "linguisticality".

understanding and interpreters must be open to this possibility.

Gadamer demonstrates how application and meaning are interwoven by referring to the role of precedent in the interpretation and application of a law (Gadamer 2013, pp. 320–321), where deciding on the meaning of the legal text and deciding how to apply it to a particular case are not neatly separable, because previous applications should influence the interpretation. From this follows that understanding depends on applying the universal to the particular and Gadamer (2013, pp. 322–333) devotes a section to ethical deliberation in Aristotle's philosophy as a model of this aspect of the hermeneutic problem of application. Similar to Aristotelian ethics, application does not as straightforward as first understanding the universal principle and then applying it to a particular situation, because to the universal cannot be understood by an interpreter disregarding his particularity—the understanding depends on the relation between the universal and particular. In this sense, application plays an active role in determining understanding. Then Gadamer (2013, p. 336) returns to legal hermeneutics and considers the case, not of a judge trying to apply the law to a case, but of a legal historian interested in the 'original' meaning of the law and shows that the legal historian cannot know the law without an awareness of the changes that seperates the present from the past. In short, the legal historian must do exactly what the judge does when interpreting the law and has to consider also the intermediate applications of the law to grasp its full meaning. In fact, Gadamer (2013, p. 337) considers legal hermeneutics as a good model for the relationship of the past and the present. The examples of application show historically effected consciousness at work in hermeneutic activity.

3.3.4 Summary

Taylor (2002, pp. 126–127) notes the difference between the model based on the scientific understanding of an object and a model of understanding based on the understanding reached between interlocutors; according to Gadamer the second dialogical model is the only one appropriate for

understanding texts or events. According to the dialogical model, understanding is bilaterally achieved, dependent on the interlocutors' positions, and involves revising goals (Taylor 2002, p. 128). In the experience of negation, the point where our "previous sense of reality is undone, refuted, and show itself as needing to be reconstituted" (Taylor 2002, p. 128), we enter in this dialogue where both that which is not as it was supposed to be and our knowledge become transformed and "both things change—our knowledge and its object. We know better now, and that means that [...] the new object contains the truth about the old one" (Gadamer 2013, p. 363).

The three perspectives on understanding that Gadamer presented put together gives us a historically effected consciousness in which understanding is best thought of as a single event. Gadamer's explanation of the role of history and tradition in the hermeneutic circle leaves the epistemological problem of discerning between true and false prejudices that provide the ground for our understanding. In this tradition, with the benefit of hindsight and correction afforded it by the distancing effect of time, proves to be both a source of prejudices and a legitimate authority for discerning between true and false prejudices. The single event of understanding includes the moment of application, because applying the text to a particular situation aids in understanding the text. Understanding in Gadamer's perspective is not something achieved by an interpreter, but best seen as an event that occurs when the horizons of the text and the interpreter (or the present and the past, or the universal and the particular) are fused. Ontologically, meaningful experience is anchored in language, since what we seek to understand is expressed in language and the interpretive tools we use to grapple with that are also given in language. In other words, language is both the medium by which we understand and the object we are trying to understand.

3.4 Ricoeur: phenomenological hermeneutics

Although Ricoeur is a philosopher, he made contributions to an incredibly wide range of fields from psychology to politics. For our argument here, we are only interested in his hermeneutic ideas, but it must be noted that there is continuity in his work that addresses larger issues and these cannot be addressed properly here. As far as hermeneutics goes, Ricoeur was originally only interested in the interpretation of symbols, because at that point of the development of his ideas, he has not yet encountered Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. The result of his engagement with Gadamer was a broadening of Ricoeur's hermeneutic interest to include discourse in general. Piercey (2016, p. 413) interprets the development of Ricoeur's hermeneutic thought as a movement from using hermeneutics to clarify the nature of the will, evil, and the unconscious, to an interest in interpretation and understanding itself, making hermeneutics the subject matter of his investigations. The early Ricoeur (1973c, p. 112) sees hermeneutics as "the theory of the operations of understanding in their relation to the interpretation of texts". He explicates the task of hermeneutics more fully in *On Interpretation*:

> [The task of hermeneutics is] to seek in the text itself, on the one hand, the internal dynamic that governs the structuring of the work and, on the other hand, the power that the work possesses to project itself outside itself and to give birth to a world that would truly be the 'thing' referred to by the text. This internal dynamic and external projection constitute what I call the work of the text. It is the task of hermeneutics to reconstruct this twofold work. (Ricoeur 1991a, pp. 17–18)

Ricoeur is indebted to Husserl's phenomenology and in the above quote is talking about the 'meaning-intention'[11] of both the internal dynamic and

[11] *Bedeutingsintention* in Husserl, often translated simply as 'intentionality'.

the external projection. There is a belief in what the text wants to convey and it is conveyed to readers with the intent to convince, change or stir them in some way. The intentionality at stake here are the meaning-intentions acccompanying the text, not the intention of the author when penning the text. The goal is not just to understand the text as a standalone object, but to understand the world that is projected by the text.

Ricoeur (1975, p. 85) explains that "hermeneutics is built on the basis of phenomenology [which] remains the indispensable presupposition of hermeneutics", but in turn phenomenology depends on interpretation and therefore hermeneutics. Phenomenology is explicitly focused on meaning, but hermeneutics is the discipline for getting at the "concealed meanings" for which Husserl's descriptive method is not suited. The condition of finitude as hermeneutic principle imposes a limit on the phenomenological 'ideal of scientificity' (Ricoeur 1975, p. 88); whereas phenomenology advocates "the return to intuition", hermeneutics holds that there is no escaping interpretation, because it mediates all understanding (Ricoeur 1975, p. 89); where phenomenology is rooted in subjectivity, hermeneutics holds that "the Cogito also could be submitted to the radical critique that phenomenology applies otherwise to all appearances" (Ricoeur 1975, p. 91); the primacy of phenomenological subjectivity is further questioned by the autonomy of text and the world it discloses from the authorial intention (Ricoeur 1975, p. 93); lastly, phenomenology sees the subject as the anchor of meaning, whilst hermeneutics sees the subject being transformed by or responding to the text: "It shows that the act of subjectivity is less what starts than what completes. This conclusive act could be expressed as appropriation (*Zueignung*)" (Ricoeur 1975, p. 94).

After making these distinctions between phenomenology and hermeneutics, Ricoeur suggests a phenomenological hermeneutics by outlining the phenomenological presuppositions of hermeneutics. The most basic of these phenomenological assumptions is the preoccupation with the question of being, because this is what makes hermeneutics philosophical rather than just methodological. Hermeneutics has the task to "addresses the linguistic condition—namely the *Sprachlichkeit*—of all experience" (Ricoeur 1975,

p. 96). Ricoeur (1975, p. 97) also sees a phenomenological commitment in the importance of 'distanciation' in hermeneutics for a consciousness of meaning: "Phenomenology begins when, not content to 'live' [...] we interpret the lived in order to signify it" (Ricoeur 1975, p. 97). Without the phenomenon of distanciation, hermeneutics loses its critical character or "moment of suspicion". Furthermore, *Sprachlichkeit* "shares with phenomenology the thesis of the derived character of merely linguistic meanings" (Ricoeur 1975, p. 98).

Piercey (2016, p. 414) divides Ricoeur's philosophical career into the exploration of hermeneutics at the level of the word, sentence, and text (discourse). Ricoeur (2003) introduced the distinctions between these levels to order the studies in *The Rule of Metaphor*—where metaphor on the level of the word concerns rhetoric, that on the level of sentences concern semantics, and that on the level of discourse concern hermeneutics—and according to Piercey (2016, p. 414) it provides a useful orientation for the different phases in Ricoeur's career. At the level of the word, the early Ricoeur was interested in the hermeneutics of symbols devoted to an analysis of the difference between the semantic meaning of signs and symbolic meaning of symbols (Ricoeur 1967, p. 352); according to which symbols always have multiple meanings intended in multiple ways in what Ricoeur (1967, p. 15) called 'double intentionality'. The hermeneutic task is to recover the original meaning of symbols which became neglected in modernity. The middle of his career was devoted to the hermeneutics of metaphor (Ricoeur 1974b; Ricoeur 1978; Ricoeur 2003)[12] moving from words to sentences. The later Ricoeur explores the phenomenon of narrative and its implications for selfhood, ethics, and action (Ricoeur 1980; Ricoeur 1984a; Ricoeur 1984b; Ricoeur 1988; Ricoeur 1991b; Ricoeur 1992). Narratives bring sentences describing actions together in a temporal ordering. Narrative is a powerful device because it unfolds as processes of prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration leading to an ever-widening spiral of understanding.

[12] *The Rule of Metaphor* was originally published in French in 1975 and translated to English in 1977.

3.4.1 The long route through the hermeneutic circle

Throughout Ricoeur's approach is incredibly reasonable and he tries to resolve antinomies as far as possible, between teleological and archeological hermeneutics, between explanation and understanding, between truth and method, between distanciation and appropriation, between history and fiction, and so forth. For instance, focusing on Dilthey's distinction between explanation and understanding, Ricoeur (1981) argued that this is a false opposition, since deeper understanding can lead to improved explanation and a good explanation can improve understanding in turn. Thus explanation and understanding combine dialectically. Ricoeur did not naïvely believe that all dichotomies are resolvable (Piercey 2016, p. 416). While he constantly searched for synthesis, he believes that even in cases where one fails to resolve the dichotomy neatly, improved understanding also comes from engaging with the tension inherent between two sides of an opposition. In fact, Ricoeur advocates taking 'the long route' towards understanding, because of this promise of deeper understanding.

In *Existence and Hermeneutics*, Ricoeur (1974a) distinguishes between the short and the long route on the way to understanding. The short route is the one proposed by Heidegger and followed by Gadamer: it bypasses questions of method to get straight to the question of being and it effectively dissolves the problem of understanding in ontology The long route follows Husserl and phenomenology and intends to resolve rather than dissolve the problem of understanding. Ricoeur (1974a) argues that the long route is worthwhile, because the journey (rather than the destination) is an important part of arriving at understanding and the linguisticality of the world demands taking the long route.

The long route to understanding passes through the hermeneutic circle. "We must understand in order to believe, and we must believe in order to understand" (Ricoeur 1967, p. 251). Stated differently "hermeneutics proceeds from a prior understanding of the very thing that it tries to understand by interpreting it" (Ricoeur 1967, p. 251). Thus far Ricoeur sounds a lot like Heidegger, but whereas Heidegger sees the circle as a vicious one,

Ricoeur has a strategy for transcending the circle in a way that makes it a virtuous one. Whereas Schleiermacher searched for an entry into the circle, because how else can you interpret the part in terms of the whole and the whole in terms of the parts; Ricoeur is searching for a way of getting out of the circle to a place beyond it. He does so by entering into a wager:

> [T]hat I shall have a better understanding of man and of the bond between the being of man and the being of all beings if I follow the *indication* of symbolic thought. That wager then becomes the task of *verifying* my wager and saturating it, so to speak, with intelligibility. In return, the task transforms my wager: in betting *on* the significance of the symbolic world, I bet at the same time *that* my wager will be restored to me in power of reflection, in coherent discourse. (Ricoeur 1967, p. 255)

3.4.2 Textuality and Distanciation

Gadamer's *Truth and Method* had a profound impact on Ricoeur, moving him beyond his preoccupation with symbols to a hermeneutic consideration of textuality. His concern with the theory of the text does not mean that Ricoeur's hermeneutics is confined to texts in the way classical hermeneutics proposes, because Ricoeur, like Gadamer, remains interested in meaning and understanding in general. However, it means that Ricoeur uses text-interpretation as a model for interpreting the world in general and sees texts as projecting meaning out into the world (Ricoeur 1991a, pp. 17–18). He applies the model of the text (Ricoeur 1971) to a wide range of phenomena—also non-linguistic phenomena—from actions (Ricoeur 1973b) to selves (Ricoeur 1992).

Hekman (1986, p. 141) notes that "Ricoeur supplies the link between actions and texts that is missing in Gadamer's work". Ricoeur prefers the model of the text to Gadamer's model of dialogue (Madison 1994, pp. 322–323), because he believes that the relation between reader and text holds more promise that the relation between conversationalists. Ricoeur (1991a, p. 17) argues that "writing tears itself free of the limits of face-to-face dia-

logue" and in that it frees itself from the speaker's intention (Ricoeur 1973a, p. 133), from the situation of discourse, and from the original intended audience (Ricoeur 1973a, p. 134); this is not the case in dialogue between interlocutors where these aspects coincide. The concept of 'distanciation' captures this freeing effect of textuality. To be sure, Ricoeur got the idea from Gadamer, but he now moves beyond Gadamer in his consideration of text and action (Ricoeur 1973b). The parallel between written texts and completed actions are in the first instance that they can be interpreted separately from the author or actor. The distanciated fixedness of both texts and actions mean that they are in principle investigable with similar methods. Taking as its data the accomplished actions containing objective distanciated meanings, the social sciences are hermeneutical insofar as those actions can be approached like written texts (Hekman 1986, p. 144). This move opens up the notion of textuality to the wide range of phenomena that Ricoeur approached during his career.

He believes that Gadamer chose for belonging-to tradition over the goal of objectivity of scientific method and in characteristic fashion he wants to overcome the opposition. Whilst distanciation sounds like a negative phenomenon, Ricoeur recasts it as positive. Ricoeur (1991a, p. 76) sees the productive function of distanciation in that the text captures the historicity of experience in that "it is communication in and through distance". Whilst distanciation is possible in non-textual forms of discourse, textuality offers the most advanced form of distanciation that is built up over stages. Firstly language becomes discourse within the text (Ricoeur 1991a, p. 76), secondly it becomes a structured work that is composed and has a genre and a style (Ricoeur 1991a, p. 78), thirdly the text projects a world since it is freed from its author and the originally intended audience, fourthly the interpretive reader can now appropriate "the proposed world which I could inhabit and wherein I could project one of my ownmost possibilities" (Ricoeur 1991a, p. 86), thus the reader gains self-understanding through determining what the text means for him or her. Normally in hermeneutics the distance between the reader and the author (or between our context now and the events of the past we want to understand) is seen as an obstacle,

but Ricoeur's treatment shows distanciation to be positive since the reader can come to self-understanding through engagement with the world of the work (free from the original intent of the author or the meanings attributed by the intended audience). Ricoeur demonstrates that textuality connects the subjectivity of the self and the objectivity of the world.

3.4.3 Time and Narrative

Ricoeur (1984b, pp. xi, 9) builds on the choice he made in *The Rule of Metaphor* for an Aristotelian definition of mimesis (*mīmēsis*) as the imitation of action, rather than a Platonic definition of mimesis as the imitation of nature (Ricoeur 1984b, p. 34). Narrative is the form of mimesis that depicts human action in an ordered way thanks to emplotment that "integrates into one whole and complete story multiple and scattered events, thereby schematizing the intelligible signification attached to the narrative as a whole" (Ricoeur 1984b, p. x). Through the emplotment function of narrative, we relate events to events before and after to achieve a humanisation of time itself by depicting actions that happened in time, but making these actions intelligible by linking them and absorbing them into a larger already meaningful narrative. Ricoeur (1984b, p. 3) expresses it in another instance of the hermeneutic circle where, "time becomes human time to the extent that it is organized after the manner of a narrative; narrative, in turn, is meaningful to the extent that it portrays the features of temporal experience". Against this background the task of hermeneutics in the light of narrativity is to understand human action through narrative mimesis, since people achieve self-understanding through interpreting their lives as though they are narratives.

Ricoeur (1984b, pp. 46, 52) develops the Aristotelian notion of mimesis further, but identifying three steps in the process which he calls mimesis_1, mimesis_2, and mimesis_3.[13] Mimesis_1 is prefiguration, Ricoeur (1984b, p. 64) argues that the representation of action depends on a pre-understanding of

[13]Section 5.1.3 describes Ricoeur's circle of mimesis more fully as part of a consideration of the epistemology and ontology of narrative in hermeneutics.

what human action is. Without this preunderstanding we won't be able to interpret narratives or compose them. Mimesis_2 is configuration (Ricoeur 1984b, p. 64) or emplotment which integrates the various narrative elements "agents, goals, means, interactions, circumstances, unexpected results" (Ricoeur 1984b, p. 65) into a story. Mimesis_2 mediates between these various elements and the story as a whole (Ricoeur 1984b, p. 65) and it turns the chronology of the events into a configurational whole that's the point of the story (Ricoeur 1984b, p. 67). Mimesis_3 is refiguration or "the intersection of the world of the text and the world of the hearer or reader" (Ricoeur 1984b, p. 77) where the meaning of the world of the narrative for the life-world must be negotiated. Together these three steps form a mimetic spiral we brought our pre-understanding of the world to the narrative (prefiguration) in our attempt to understand it and afterwards our understanding of the world is changed as a result of the narrative. These two steps are connected through the emplotment of narrative configuration.

3.5 Hermeneutics as technique and as perspective

Hermeneutics has a long and varied history punctuated by many controversies between various hermeneutic schools of thought. These controversies can be presented in various ways. For instance, Palmer (1969, p. 33) distinguishes between hermeneutics as the theory of exegesis, as general philological methodology, as the science of linguistic understanding, as the methodological foundation of the human sciences, as phenomenology of existential understanding, and as the systems of interpretation of myths and symbols; whilst Bleicher (1980) distinguishes between classical, philosophical, and critical hermeneutics; Howard (1982) distinguishes between analytic, pscychosocial, and ontological hermeneutics; and Olafson (1986) distinguishes between analytic and dialectic hermeneutics.

However, in preparation for the analysis of Weick's distinction between sensemaking and interpretation in the next chapter, the distinction between

hermeneutics as a technique and hermeneutics as a philosophical paradigm is the one that matters.

> The only distinction that is necessary…is between hermeneutics as a technique and hermeneutics as philosophy. It is a distinction that has aspects of overlap and interrelation to the extent that, on the one hand, the technique is nourished by and involved in theoretical and methodological research, and on the other, philosophy is also exercised on a theoretical-methodological level. In fact, it is around the relationship between interpretation and comprehension that the legitimacy and speculative value of hermeneutics is at stake. This relationship defines the terrain of its problematicness and opens up the space to a series of quasi-paradoxical, if not fully paradoxical, aspects. (Busacchi 2017, p. 42)

Kearney (1994) calls this the difference between classical hermeneutics, focused on the methods employed for interpretation (primarily of various kinds of texts) and philosophical hermeneutics, focused on the phenomenon of understanding as an ontological problem. For the purposes of this argument this well-established division into two broad schools of hermeneutic thought is presented below. Bernstein (1983) and Bleicher (1980) see it as a difference between those following Dilthey and Schleiermacher, lumped together in the classical hermeneutics school, and those following Heidegger, resorting under the philosophical hermeneutics school. The encounters between classical and philosophical hermeneutics will be summarised here as Betti's critique of Gadamer with Gadamer responding, then Hirsch's critique (based on Betti's ideas) of Gadamer with Ricoeur responding. The purpose of the reconstruction is to highlight the salient themes and not to present the polemic as it in fact happened historically, because many more scholars were involved.

3.5.1 Classical hermeneutics

The foremost exponents of classical hermeneutics are first Betti and later Hirsch who try to stay true to Dilthey's vision and views hermeneutics "as a general body of methodological principles and rules for achieving validity in interpretation" (Kearney 1994, p. 242). What this view offers is prescriptive interpretive techniques, namely the rules or principles for correct interpretations. In this view understanding is a subjective accomplishment that requires striving for objectivity.

Betti represents the zenith of classical hermeneutics with his emphasis on "objective interpretation" and his attempt to strip away the psychologistic aspects he sees in the work of Dilthey (Bleicher 1980, p. 27). He argues that there are various kinds of interpretation: re-cognitive in the case of historical or literary texts, presentational in the case of dramatic or musical texts, and normative in the case of legal and religious texts (Hirsch 1967, p. 112). The procedures for correct interpretation is contingent upon the type of text (the genre) to be interpreted. However, some frequently encountered obstacles to correct interpretation can be identified and ameliorated by the correct application of interpretive techniques.

Betti considers interpretation as the vehicle for arriving at understanding, he says: "we commence our interpretive activity whenever we come across perceivable forms through which an other mind, that has objectivated itself in them, addresses our Understanding; it is the purpose of interpretation to understand the meaning of these forms, to find out the message they wish to transmit to us" (Betti, 1967, p.42 as cited in Bleicher, 1980). However, our interpretive activity faces various barriers on the journey to understanding. Betti proposes a method for objective interpretation that is supposed to overcome these barriers. Objective interpretation requires a subject-object relationship. The object of interpretation is the product of the objectivation of the mind of another subject expressed in a text for instance.

Whilst philosophical hermeneutics celebrated 'overcoming' the subject-object division, Betti saw a regrettable slide into relativism as the inevitable

consequence of situating the hermeneutic circle in, what he saw as, an existentialist subjectivism. As a legal theorist, Betti remained committed to texts as representations of the author's intended meaning—the text is a representation of the author's mind at the point of the text's construction. His contribution was to describe the various interpretive methods that will ensure a reliable reconstruction of the intended meaning. For Betti, the reader is a subject analysing the text as an object with the expectation that it can be understood objectively. Whilst Betti remains close to the philological roots of hermeneutics, the post-Heideggerian philosophical hermeneutics departs radically from this commitment to objectivity on the basis of the pre-understanding of the reader that is shaped by changing historical circumstances. According to Betti, deferring to such historicality as Gadamer proposed leads to relativism that cannot be tolerated. He refers to religious and legal texts as examples of texts depending on their authoritative status and therefor cannot allow for subjective interpretive relativism.

Betti's target is Gadamer's apparent conflation of hermeneutic interpretation and application into a unitary event. According to Palmer (1969, p. 57), for Betti *Auslegung* or interpretation (determining what the author intended) *precedes Sinngebung* or application (deciding what the author's message means for one's historical context). Betti argued that the meaning of the text is accessible objectively and the significance that meaning might have for a particular context is dependent on subjective and contingent circumstances. Of course, Gadamer would demur that when viewed descriptively interpretation does not happen in two separate steps the way Betti prescribes since it is impossible to escape one's horizon of understanding.

Betti's distinction between meaning and significance inspired Hirsch's objections to various schools of thought[14] that according to him are vul-

[14]Philosophical hermeneutics is only one of the schools of thought that according to Hirsch leads to interpretive relativism. He also criticised those following Schleiermacher with interpretation based on empathy with the author, those that reduced textual interpretation to an analysis of its formal aspects only, and post-structuralists for their claim about the 'death of the author'. He finds fault with those that find the meaning in the

nerable to relativism. Hirsch defends Betti's position that understanding *precedes* application. According to Hirsch (1967, p. 8), "[s]ignificance always implies a relationship and one constant, unchanging pole of that relationship is what the text means. Failure to consider this simple and essential distinction has been the source of enormous confusion in hermeneutic theory". The meaning of the text is its unchanging objective description, whilst its significance is the variable subjective evaluation by a particular person for a particular context or application. Hirsch (1967, p. 3) bemoans the fact that "no adequate principle [exists] for judging the validity of an interpretation" and sets himself the task for defending such a principle on the basis of authorial intent. The reason his concern is with interpretive validity matters (and implicitly his assessment of Gadamer) is as follows: "If we cannot enunciate a principle for distinguishing between an interpretation that is valid and one that is not, there is little point in writing books about texts or about hermeneutic theory" (Hirsch 1967, p. 251).

The principle for validity in interpretation is then that the intended meaning of the author is the target of interpretation. This succeeds in countering relativism, because the *original* intention of the author does not change. Hirsch needed to limit the intent of the author to what the author originally intended when the text was created to circumvent the frequently occurring problem of authors disavowing or disagreeing with their earlier works. In other words, authorial intention is not tied to the person of the author, it is tied to the moment of composition, after which the person who authored the text becomes just another reader of the text. Having found a fixed point in which to anchor universally valid meaning, Hirsch now further limits the task of interpretation to be focused on only establishing this meaning. After the fixed meaning has been derived, the application of it to a particular context is the question of the significance of that meaning and that is of a variable nature that will differ from case to case.

Hirsch was realistic about the likelihood of achieving a valid interpre-

---

text subjectively (romantic- and philosophical hermeneutics), and with those that arrive at the meaning via technique alone (the examples he chooses of this are New Critism and post-structuralism).

tation that correctly captures the author's original intent, because even for the author, returning to the text at a later point requires a reconstruction of its meaning. Such reconstruction will always be coloured by the context of the reader, but this does not detract from the ideal principle that the fundamental reference point and regulative ideal should be original authorial intent. Whilst the context and preferences of the reader are relevant when determining the significance of a text, when it comes to determining its valid meaning, the context and preferences that stand between us and a valid reading of the originally intended meaning of the author should as far as possible be overcome.

3.5.2 Philosophical hermeneutics

Gadamer and Ricoeur are the foremost exponents of philosophical hermeneutics. In contrast to the classical school they try to describe what occurs when we understand something. Understanding is not an act, but an event that happens to us. Whilst the two hermeneutic traditions can be seen as complementary, it should be immediately obvious that they operate with two totally different worldviews. Philosophical hermeneutics sees understanding as an experience of living in the world, rather than as a product of the interpreting task that one can choose to undertake or not. This school of thought is also much less optimistic about the possibility of stripping oneself of presuppositions that are a result of one's socio-historical embeddedness and achieving objectivity than the classical hermeneutics school is. In fact it is argued that rather than removing presuppositions, the phenomenon of understanding is instead an instance of engaging one's presuppositions. Understanding is something that happens whilst interacting with the world, rather than something that is available to be uncovered.

Unlike Betti, Gadamer's project is not to re-establish a general hermeneutic interpretation, but to identify what is common to all the different modes of understanding. "I do not wish to elaborate a system of rules to describe, let alone direct, the methodological procedure of the human sciences" (Gadamer 2004, p. xxviii) and "[…] the purpose of my investigation

is [...] to discover what is common to all modes of understanding and to show that understanding is never a subjective relation to a given object" (Gadamer 2004, p. xxxi).[15]

Gadamer's explanation here is a response to Betti's criticism that he gave up on objectivity in interpretation and neglected the importance of interpretive technique. Gadamer rejects Betti's criticism, because an exhaustive catalogue of methods used during understanding is not likely to capture what is common to all understanding. Gadamer is not offering theory or prescriptions, but a description of what happens when we understand.

Ricoeur was more sympathetic to the quest for objective truth that Hirsch championed and more sensitive than Gadamer to the role of texts in interpretation. However, he rejected Hirsch's dichotomy between the fixed intended meaning of the text and its variable significance for each reader on the basis that the author's originally intended meaning does not exists as an accessible and recognisable object. Hirsh's 'original' intention is at best an 'alleged' intention, because the original psychic experience of the author of a particular text is not communicable outside that text.

> [T]o understand a text is not to rejoin the author. The disjunction of the meaning and the intention creates an absolutely original situation which engenders the dialectic of *erklären* and *verstehen*. If the objective meaning is something other than the subjective intention of the author, it may be construed in various ways. The problems of the right understanding can no longer be solved by a simple return to the alleged intention of the author. (Ricoeur 1973b, p. 105)

Furthermore, we simply do not read texts in the way Hirsch proposes by first establishing its originally intended meaning and then considering what it signifies for our situation. Whilst Hirsch used very simple sentences as examples to illustrate the difference between the fixed meaning and variable

[15] Gadamer's book *Wahrheit und Methode* was originally published in 1960 in German.

significance of texts, Ricoeur notes that texts demanding hermeneutic effort refract with potentially inexhaustible meaning giving "the reconstruction of the whole [...] a perspectivist aspect similar to that of perception" (Ricoeur 1973b, p. 107). The text is thus a process rather than a sum of textual parts, it displays a 'plurivocity' as a whole that is more than the 'polysemy' of its parts: "This plurivocity is typical of the text considered as a whole, open to several readings and to several constructions" (Ricoeur 1973b, p. 107). Whilst Hirsch thinks it possible to simply recover the originally intended meaning from the text, Ricoeur thinks that the meaning has to be constructed (or perhaps re-constructed) through an interpretative process that draws on the integrative ability of the reader to make the text a meaningful whole. Since many subjective choices based on contingent aspects play an essential role in the construction of meaning, the distinction between meaning and significance does not hold.

To summarise the broad thrust of philosophical hermeneutics as a perspective: it departs from an acceptance of our finite existence, which implies that an absolute understanding is out of the question. Whilst classical hermeneutics saw our prejudices and our temporal and cultural distance from the world of the text as obstacles to be overcome before we can understand, philosophical hermeneutics regards these things as a departure point that can be productive for reaching an understanding. This commitment means that there cannot be final interpretations and the character of understanding is that it is always incomplete, contextual, and contingent. However, instead of resigning to relativism or nihilism, philosophical hermeneutics regards the absence of an absolute interpretation as a good thing, because it makes new insights possible through the continual process of reinterpretation.

3.6 Hermeneutics in organisation theory

Despite its ancient origins and long history, hermeneutics never became a properly established perspective for organisational inquiry. Myers (2004, p. 104) notes that hermeneutic approaches in organisational research have

been remarkably few and far between: "[o]ver the past 20 years most of the major journals have published only 3–4 articles that engage with hermeneutic philosophy in some way". As late as 2002, a top tier journal, *Organizational Research Methods*, published an article by Prasad and Mir (2002b) that *introduced* hermeneutics as a way to interpret texts in organisations. This surprising neglect does not mean that organisational research was not influenced by hermeneutic methods, much of the qualitative research on organisations owe a debt to hermeneutics, but this debt is largely unacknowledged. Barrett, Powley, and Pearce (2011) makes precisely this point in an overview and appraisal of the influence of hermeneutic philosophy on organisational theory. They argue that the areas of organisational culture, -sensemaking,[16] -identity, -dialogue, and situated learning were among those influenced by hermeneutic ideas, even though this influence is rarely explicitly noted by researchers working in these areas.

The many examples of hermeneutic techniques used for research in the area of organisational communication is not surprising. Both early proposals (Kets de Vries and Miller 1987; Prasad and Mir 2002b) for using hermeneutics to study organisational texts in particular represent the most straight-forward use of hermeneutics, originally developed for textual interpretation, but now applied to organisational texts, and their associated genres with presumably their own interpretive constraints, in particular. For instance, Lee (1994) studied emails as a particular genre of organisational texts; arguing that, since it is text-based, email is assumed to be a lean communication channel, but is in fact much richer than many other texts. Phillips and Brown (1993) broadens the scope of the inquiry, using hermeneutic methods to study both intra- and extra-organisational communication. Gabriel (1991) expanded beyond strict communication to a hermeneutic study of organisational folklore to show how those stories influence decisions and become "facts", as well as how particular "facts" are turned into stories.

The field of information systems research, although only tangentially

[16]The extent to which sensemaking was influenced by hermeneutics is the subject of the next chapter that analyses Weick's influences.

related to organisational studies, proved to be much more fertile ground for hermeneutic approaches. An overview of information systems research by Myers (2004) explicitly focuses on hermeneutics; similarly an overview by Walsham (1995) includes hermeneutics as an influence on extant interpretive methods in the field. Examples of hermeneutics in information systems research include a study about system design (Boland and Day 1989) and information systems project failure (Myers 1994).

Further examples include the study of organisational influence activities (Lueger et al. 2005), where the authors propose an "objective hermeneutical approach" that puts them squarely in the classical hermeneutics camp. They present a process to reconstruct the underlying applicable rules in a specific organisational context. Since they consider these rules to be independent structures found in social fields, they call their approach 'objective.' In the area of public administration, White (2009) studies the hermeneutics of government contracting.

Much of organisational research with an explicit hermeneutics interest, relies on the appraisal of Ricoeur and Habermas by Thompson (1981) and his operationalisation of an approach called 'critical hermeneutics'. Some examples of studies that use a critical hermeneutical method include a study by Gopinath and Prasad (2012) that uses a critical hermeneutical method to study multi-national enterprise behaviour and rhetoric, another by Phillips and Brown (1993) analysed communication in and around organizations. The study by Phillips and Brown (1993) is situated in the domain of organisational communication, seeing organisational communication as attempts to present and entrenched privileged understandings of the organisational dynamics in service of sustaining or establishing their preferred pattern of social relations. The critical aspect of their analysis is the reading of organisational texts as instruments in perpetuating or establishing a pattern of dominance and power. They seek to reveal why particular meanings became better established than others. Their analysis is emblematic of a critical hermeneutics approach in that they analyse the texts and the socio-historical context and then reinterpreting that "to produce an interpretation of the text and its role in the social system of which it is a part" (Phillips and

Brown 1993, p. 1554). They apply this strategy to three advertisements that formed part of a particular company's campaign to improve its image. These advertisements form the texts available for the formal analysis, whilst desktop research of media coverage of the organisation and internal company documentation were the raw material for the socio-historical analysis. Finally in the critical analysis, they try to understand the advertisements as attempts to "structure understandings in a way favorable to the producer of the text" (Phillips and Brown 1993, p. 1568) by highlighting both the information content as well as the interpretive frames (in the form of particular societal myths yielding a favourable company image) suggested by the advertisements.

Prasad and Mir (2002a) did a critical hermeneutic analysis of CEO letters to shareholders in the oil industry. In their study Prasad and Mir (2002a) collected the letters to shareholders that were published in the annual reports of the companies, then they considered the context in which these letters were written, followed by an analysis of the texts against the background of "the social, cultural, historical, and industrial context"(Prasad and Mir 2002a, p. 97), and lastly they reread the letters as instances of orientalism[17] (which can be seen as the critical analysis).

A good example of a study employing critical hermeneutics is that of Robinson and Kerr (2009) that used a critical hermeneutic method comprised of four stages to analyse transcribed interviews about leadership and succession in an organisation. The final stage of their method consists of checking their interpretation of the interviews with the interviewees, thus including the sources in the interpretive approach.

Finally, Rao and Pasmore (1989) highlight four qualitative research paradigms in organisation studies, the social innovation perspective, critical inquiry, language games, and hermeneutics. They note that whilst hermeneutics has much to offer the field, it's the least developed of these four paradigms as far as organisational research goes.

[17]Orientalism is a theory by Edward Said about how Western discourses create an oriental other.

3.7 Conclusion

This overview of the central ideas of hermeneutics and its application to the field of organisation studies showed that there is no philosophical hermeneutic reflection on the phenomenon of organising itself. On the whole, hermeneutics figures merely as an accepted qualitative method for conducting qualitative research in organisations, but not as a perspective on the nature of organising and organisations—in other words hermeneutics had influence with regard to epistemological aspects of organisational inquiry, but little with regard to its ontology.

After the distinction between hermeneutics as technique and as worldview, we can now reflect back on the discussion about hermeneutics in organisation research and note that the bulk of it fits in the hermeneutics as technique category. In organisational inquiry, hermeneutics is primarily used as a technique for interpreting certain phenomena inside organisations (for instance cultural artefacts routinely produced in organisations like corporate publications, memos, or CEO letters), but there is no hermeneutic theory of organisation in total. It is entirely possible to think in behaviourist terms about organisations, and use interpretive techniques from hermeneutics to understand artefacts found to help you better situate the facts, without committing to the philosophical hermeneutic view regarding the partial nature of understanding. In other words, the hermeneutics found in organisation research fits with the classical-analytic hermeneutics camp. One would expect it to be different in the case of critical hermeneutics, however when looking at the studies by the theorists following Thompson (1981) it becomes apparent that they also use hermeneutic techniques for studying organisational phenomena with the one distinguishing feature that the initial result of hermeneutic analysis is not presented as a final interpretation, but is subjected to a round of comments by the 'authors' of the texts—typically in the form of revisiting interviewees and providing them an opportunity to comment on the researchers initial analysis of the content of the interviews—thus producing a double hermeneutic as a critical moment in the analysis.

Perhaps the reason for this has to do with the fact that the hermeneutic approaches accepted in the organisational research field view the actions and thoughts of organisational members as raw material to be interpreted, rather than viewing organisational action as intertwined with interpretation and existence—in hermeneutic language, knowing as rooted in guiding interests, but these interests are probably more diverse than normally assumed in organisational contexts. Of course, the issue with philosophical hermeneutics is that it does not provide a neat method to be followed when conducting research; instead it provides a conglomerate of guiding ideas and principles regarding the nature of reflection, understanding, and judgement. In other words, it does not offer any easy answers that hold for all situations.

Hermeneutics in organisational research underwhelms, both in terms of the empirical research it produces and in terms of the level of engagement with the central ideas from philosophical hermeneutics in general, because it is almost exclusively focused on techniques for interpreting qualitative interviews with members of organisations or for interpreting organisational texts, rather than concerned with the problem of how intersubjective understanding is achieved in organisations through mutual adjustment, organising, or systems design. Compared with what we have seen from the previous chapter, organisational sensemaking tries to address these organisational issues and offers a theory of organisation as socially constructed. However, it falls short because of a narrow understanding of interpretation. The reasons for this narrow conception of interpretation will be unpacked in the next chapter by tracing the interpretivist and social psychological route by which Weick arrived at his constructionist position. All things considered, it is a shame that hermeneutics is so poorly established in the organisation and management fields, because the central ideas from philosophical hermeneutics have much to offer in way of answering the kind of questions that Weick asks.

Chapter 4

Sensemaking and Hermeneutics

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Background Problem

Sensemaking is sometimes classified as a hermeneutic approach to organisations, or at least evidence of how hermeneutics influenced the organisation studies field (Barrett, Powley, and Pearce 2011, p. 207). Many of the concepts used in organisational sensemaking theory resonate with hermeneutic ideas. Sensemaking is directly concerned with how meaning is made in organisations, the ongoing property of sensemaking is inspired by the idea of 'thrownness', language is afforded a central role in sensemaking, deliberate sensemaking is triggered by dissonant 'difference' between beliefs and actions, and the selection of cues involves 'noticing', 'bracketing', and 'labeling'. All of these concepts are familiar in the traditions of phenomenology, existentialism, and hermeneutics. Since the overall claim made here is that there is too little hermeneutics in organisational sensemaking, the assertion that sensemaking is a special form of hermeneutics needs to be confronted head-on in this chapter. As we have seen previously, there is a lot of diversity in hermeneutics, but they all share a focus on interpretation. Early in his career, Weick co-wrote an article (Daft and Weick 1984) about organisations as interpretation systems. This article established Weick as a major

interpretivist writer on organisations and is perhaps the reason why some readers consider his work to be 'hermeneutical'. However, as his own theory matured, he increasingly juxtaposed sensemaking and interpretation.

This chapter investigates the traces of hermeneutics in sensemaking theory and assesses its characterisation as hermeneutical. Read against the previous chapter that showed the diversity in hermeneutics, it is demonstrated that Weick has a very narrow and negative conception of hermeneutics. It is however also true that Weick's intellectual antecedents were influenced by hermeneutics to various degrees and, like any interpretivist research approach, organisational sensemaking bears the mark of hermeneutics, albeit in transformed ways. The ways in which hermeneutics feature in interpretivist and constructionist approaches are described and contrasted with a broadly philosophical hermeneutic approach.

It is argued that the interpretation that Weick juxtaposes with sensemaking is interpretation as understood in the classical hermeneutic sense and that from the viewpoint of philosophical hermeneutics the distinction would be hard to maintain. It is demonstrated how Weick's organisational sensemaking theory derives from interpretive sociology and social psychology. Organisational sensemaking is a combination of constructionism and cognitive theories that employ a focus on processes of organisation to engage the problem of (collective) meaning in organisations. The problem of meaning is normally approached with hermeneutics—an approach that Weick's distinction between sensemaking and interpretation seems to slight. It is argued that Weick's distinction is based on a partial view of hermeneutics. Furthermore a closer analysis reveals that Weick's own use of these concepts is not consistent and that this inconsistency is consequential for how organisational sensemaking is used by others following Weick. Finally it is proposed that hermeneutics offers resources neglected by Weick to engage the problem of meaning in organisations in a way that a focus on constructionism and cognition cannot.

The argument of this chapter can be expressed by embroidering on Weick's observation that sensemaking is about authoring and reading. The resources that Weick primarily draws upon, namely social constructionism

and interpretive sociology, represent authoring and reading respectively. Weick makes a straw-man argument of classical hermeneutics, which concerns only reading with its insistence on the authorial intention and rules for the interpretation of texts. However, Weick neglected philosophical hermeneutics, even though from all the available resources, it probably best addresses both authoring and reading. The implication is that organisational sensemaking would be better understood and more useful if the theory draws upon philosophical hermeneutics, rather than social constructionism and interpretivist sociology the way it does in Weick's conception.

4.1.2 Chapter outline

The chapter starts with an analysis focused on Weick's distinction between sensemaking and interpretation. With this distinction Weick seeks to establish interpretation as a subset of sensemaking and claims a privileged position for the role of action for enacting increasing sense into puzzling situations. It is argued that the interpretation that Weick juxtaposes with sensemaking is interpretation as understood in the classical hermeneutics sense and that from the viewpoint of philosophical hermeneutics it is hard to see much difference between interpretation and what Weick calls sensemaking.

Having established that what Weick intended with organisational sensemaking is similar to how interpretation figures in philosophical hermeneutics, the question is whether Weick's sensemaking is not just philosophical hermeneutics under a different label? With his organisational sensemaking concept, Weick clearly did not happen upon the same answer as Gadamer and Ricoeur (presumably without having read them) about how understanding occurs. Various analyses address this issue and try to account for the similarities and differences:

The first analysis takes stock of Weick's major influences and the aspects of organisational sensemaking each of these inspired. This section identifies the theoretical building blocks of organisational sensemaking, provides an overview of the use of the concept of sensemaking in the organisation

and management studies fields, discusses selected theoretical antecedents to sensemaking theory, and argues that organisational sensemaking is best seen as a particular form of social constructionism.

The second analysis considers the traces of philosophical hermeneutics found in organisational sensemaking via interpretive sociology (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Schutz 1967) and ethnomethodology (Garfinkel 1967; Goffman 1974), as well as the references to Heidegger via other writers (Weick 1995, pp. 44, 90).

The third analysis reconsiders the four ways the theory explains how people make sense of ongoing flows of experience, namely through arguing, expecting, committing, and manipulating, to identify the hermeneutic moment in each of these acts of framing. Weick follows Goffman (1974) with a framing metaphor and the structure of understanding achieved by such framing is contrasted with the structure of understanding viewed as the fusion of horizons in philosophical hermeneutics. The purpose of this contrasts is to highlight the difference between philosophical hermeneutic reasoning and the interpretivist social science that inspired Weick and provided him with the building blocks of his organisational sensemaking theory.

Together these analyses shows that, although philosophical hermeneutics no doubt inspired Weick in a roundabout way, ideas emanating from micro-interactionist, social constructionist, and social psychological considerations are far more influential in the actual operation of organisational sensemaking (and Weick still seems ignorant of the philosophical hermeneutic tradition).

Philosophical hermeneutics will provide slightly different answers to organisational issues than sensemaking theory would. However, since it is hard to consider this in abstract, the next part turns to a particular organisational issue, namely organisational identity as a field and phenomenon, where typical sensemaking and hermeneutics approaches can be contrasted.

4.2 Organisations as interpretive systems

Simon's work on administrative behaviour view an organisation as a social structure in service of making and coordinating decisions to tie resources to collective goals. One of the assumptions of this view is that organising is a way to pre-process information to make it available at levels of aggregation where decision-makers have the expertise and procedures to complete the processing and take good enough decisions. Simon (1973) expounded this view of organisations as information processors in an article about information technology and organisational design where he argues that information processing is a major problem of organisation (Simon 1973, p. 276). Galbraith (1974) offers an influential theory of this view of organising as information processing and offers various strategies for organisations to ensure that their information processing capacity is not outstripped by environmental demands. The field of research departing from an information processing view, focus on the extent to which environmental conditions, which are the sources of the information processing requirements for a given organisation, are matched by organisational design features, which presumably contain the information processing capabilities of the organisation.

This way of thinking about the information processing demands on organisations starts from a consideration of environmental uncertainty as the most important factor. It is in this context that Daft and Weick (1984) enter the conversation with their article about organisations as interpretation systems as a corrective on the view of organisations as mere information processing systems. Daft and Weick (1984) claim that unlike lower level systems, human organisations are complex systems that constantly have to interpret their environments. It is significant that they situate their argument in the tradition of systems theory rather than in any of the interpretivist, constructionist, or hermeneutic traditions that represent the generally accepted frameworks for problems requiring interpretation. Following from this they also work with a particular definition of interpretation that fits with the information processing paradigm that underlies systems thinking. Daft and Weick (1984, p. 286) present a simple three-step model

consisting of environmental scanning (data collection), interpretation (collected data given meaning), and learning (action taken). In this model, organisational interpretation is "formally defined as the process of translating events and developing shared understandings and conceptual schemes among members of upper management" (Daft and Weick 1984, p. 286).

They propose a model that differentiates between four strategies organisations can follow to interpret their environments. These four strategies map onto two dimensions, namely management's assumptions about the environment and the extent to which the organisation is open to the environment (Daft and Weick 1984, p. 287). The first one is about the extent to which the organisation thinks its environment is analysable, and the second is about the extent to which the organisation shapes the environment in its attempts to understand it. Overlaying these two dimensions on two axes provides a standard management two-by-two matrix with four ideal types of interpretive behaviour (Daft and Weick 1984, p. 289). On the one axis the environment is considered to be either analysable or un-analysable; on the other axis the organisation is either passive or active in intruding into its environment. In this model, the unanalysable-passive quadrant represents "undirected viewing" (Daft and Weick 1984, p. 289) where organisations do not rely on objective data, but operate in a non-routine manner with informal data making constrained interpretations. The analysable-passive quadrant is the domain of "conditioned viewing" (Daft and Weick 1984, p. 289) that is based on routines aimed at formal data, even though detection is passive, with the organisation making interpretations within traditional boundaries. The analysable-active quadrant is the domain of "discovering" (Daft and Weick 1984, p. 289) where detection happens actively with formal search routines and data gathering. The unanalysable-active quadrant is the domain of "enacting" (Daft and Weick 1984, p. 288), where it is assumed the environment is unanalysable, yet the organisation acts in the environment, probing it for responses. This quadrant is where the organisation construct the environment, rather than trying to understand it. At this point it should be clear that in their view the Simonian information processing paradigm only fits in the analysable quadrants (and

perhaps could be seen as properly fitting only the analysable-passive quadrant). It should also be reasonably clear that they have in mind a very specific notion of interpretation as the activity of turning pre-existing data into information.

From this classic article, Weick elaborated his theory about the social psychology of organising over many years into a theory of organisational sensemaking. Almost a decade after the publication of the article about organisations as interpretation systems, Weick isolated a particular subset of interpretations that matter in organising, namely "committed interpretation" (Weick 1993). Organisations are sites where commitments are more visible and these commitments need to be interpreted. Weick continued to embroider this theme and in his later descriptions of organisational sensemaking, commitment is only one of "four ways in which people impose frames on ongoing flows and link frames with cues in the interest of meaning" (Weick 1995, p. 135). These four processes connect beliefs and actions, where committing and manipulating start with actions, whilst expecting and arguing start with beliefs. Committing to actions requires retrospective rationalisation, but actions can also stabilise or manipulate the environment and so render it sensible. Alternatively people can act in accordance with their expectations and so enact that which they believe, or in some cases people sharpen their beliefs through argument and that leads to consensus on what to do. In his book, *Sensemaking in Organizations* (Weick 1995), these action- and belief-driven processes are presented as the definite statement of how sense is made in organisations.

4.3 Sensemaking versus interpretation

Under a heading "The Uniqueness of Sensemaking" (Weick 1995, p. 6), Weick bemoans the fact that some people use interpretation as either a synonym for sensemaking or that people see sensemaking as metaphorical—both views he believes leads to error in understanding the true nature of sensemaking. He devotes the rest of the ten page section to a juxtaposition of sensemaking and interpretation aiming to show that sensemaking

encompasses much more than mere interpretation.

Weick (1995, chap. 2) introduces sensemaking by distinguishing it from interpretation. He argues that people are actively and collectively engaged in an ongoing sensemaking process that goes beyond interpretation (Weick 1995, p. 15). He does this because he wants to indicate that sensemaking is an active process of the *construction* of meaning, rather than the *derivation* of meaning. Interpretation is portrayed as mediating between a text and an audience and deducing meaning, whilst sensemaking is "about the ways in which people generate what they interpret" (Weick 1995, p. 13). With this distinction between sensemaking and interpretation, Weick seeks to establish interpretation as a subset of sensemaking and claims a privileged position for the role of action for enacting increasing sense into puzzling situations and the ongoing flow of experience. This distinction between sensemaking and interpretation seems superfluous from the perspective of the philosophical hermeneutics mainstream. Most philosophers will judge interpretation to involve similar active involvement on the part of the interpreter as that which Weick reserves for sensemaking. Furthermore, since hermeneutics is concerned with interpretation and offers many insights and positions helpful for tackling interpretive problems, it is strange that Weick decided to forego on this available resource in favour of developing his organisational sensemaking theory from resources ill-equipped for the task, such as cognitive dissonance, social constructionism, and interpretive sociology.

The analysis that follows seeks to show that Weick's distinction between interpretation and sensemaking is unhelpful. Not only because it is based on a partial understanding of hermeneutics, but also because it neglects hermeneutics in favour of constructionist and cognitive approaches to organisation. The partiality of Weick's understanding of hermeneutics is highlighted by the well-established distinction between two types of hermeneutics—classical and philosophical hermeneutics—the first concerned with techniques for interpretation and the second with understanding the occurrence of understanding. It is argued that Weick's partial view of hermeneutics is based on the first type, whilst the second type shares some of the features that Weick claims for sensemaking theory. However,

organisational sensemaking approaches these concerns with worldviews derived from cognitive psychology and constructionist sociology, whilst philosophical hermeneutics offers a radically different worldview. Reframing the problem of organising in terms of philosophical hermeneutics implies a more nuanced understanding of organisational sensemaking as precariously positioned between objectivism and interpretivism, in a space where not everything is enacted or retrospectively rationalised, but a collective accomplishment constrained by environmental and historical givens.

Weick contrasts sensemaking with mere interpretation both in his book, *Sensemaking in Organizations* (Weick 1995) and in the updated statement of his theory a decade later (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld 2005). However, in order to show that sensemaking is something new and unique, Weick needs to deal with the interpretation ancestry of his concept of sensemaking. He concedes that sensemaking is related to interpretation, but he claims that the concept of interpretation does not capture the full import of sensemaking. "Interpretation is often used as a synonym for sensemaking. Such synonymous usage is not a blunder, but it does blur some distinctions that seem crucial if one wishes to understand the subtleties of sensemaking" (Weick 1995, p. 6). He argues that sensemaking is interpretation with some value-add, because "interpretation focus on some kind of text. What sensemaking does is address how the text is constructed as well as how it is read. Sensemaking is authoring as well as reading" (Weick 1995, p. 7). For Weick, interpretation has to do with the derivation of meaning from cues, whilst sensemaking depends on the active intervention of a sensemaker to construct meaning.

Weick seeks to illustrate this difference by referring to a benchmark interpretivist study conducted in the Scottish knitwear industry (Porac, Thomas, and Baden-Fuller 1989). Weick quotes the basic assumptions outlined in the introduction of that study and then continues with the following analysis:

> With these materials as background, I can now say more about the uniqueness of a sensemaking perspective. Porac et al.'s

> (1989) four assumptions about the nature of an interpretive study focus on attending to cues and interpreting, externalising, and linking these cues. What is left unspecified are how the cues got there in the first place and how these particular cues were singled out from an ongoing flow of experience. Also unspecified are how the interpretations and meanings of these cues were then altered and made more explicit and sensible, as a result of "concrete activities." The process of sensemaking is intended to include the construction and bracketing of the text-like cues that are interpreted, as well as the revision of those interpretations based on action and its consequences. Sensemaking is about authoring as well as interpretation, creation as well as discovery. As we will see later, even though Porac et al. view their work as an example of an interpretive study, they actually address all aspects of the sensemaking process. (Weick 1995, p. 8)

This paragraph reveals more than what Weick takes to be the difference between interpretation and sensemaking. The final sentence of his analysis is interesting, because in it Weick makes the claim that, although Porac et al. are expert enough to be quoted as authorities on what the underlying assumptions of interpretivist research methods are, they are confused about the true nature of their own research. Indeed, he claims that instead of being an example of the interpretivist approach, their article is a good example of *sensemaking* research in organisations. In a later chapter, he returns to the Porac study as a prime example of sensemaking research and devotes a seven page section to a description of this "exemplary study [that] touched on each of the seven properties of sensemaking" (Weick 1995, p. 76) as a way to illustrate the properties of sensemaking in action. A sympathetic reader might see this as Weick reinterpreting prior studies in his own idiom. However, a critical reader might consider the possibility that Porac et al. are not confused about their theoretical departure point and, on the basis of that last evaluative sentence by Weick, perhaps even suspect there might

be no difference between interpretation and sensemaking after all.

Weick (1995, pp. 6–16) starts the case for the uniqueness of sensemaking by contrasting it with Mailloux's definition of interpretation as approximating translation (Mailloux 1990). However, Basbøll (2010, p. 174) points out that, not only did Weick misread Mailloux's analysis of the Emily Dickenson poem, there is also a logical problem with Weick's reliance on Mailloux—a literary theorist—to make a point about organisational sensemaking, especially since the point made is that meaning in organisations is not accessible in the same way as meaning in texts. In Weick's defence, he uses Mailloux's definition of interpretation as a starting point to indicate that sensemaking is different from interpretation in the literary sense and not as an authority on organisational sensemaking. Nonetheless, Basbøll goes further and claims that Weick's scholarship is questionable: "In fact, it turns out that he misreads the text that he relies on for his definition of this important notion [sensemaking], namely, Steven Mailloux's 'Interpretation.' Moreover, he plagiarizes it" Basbøll (2010, p. 171). He shows how Weick works selectively with Mailloux's text, misrepresents his paraphrase of Mailloux as his own critique, and leaves out a crucial sentence where Mailloux uses the term 'sense-making' to refer to the activity of interpreting:

> As Weick wants to distinguish between interpretation and sensemaking, one sentence in Mailloux's essay that Weick does not cite is especially conspicuous: 'Our second question moves away from the object of interpretation—the text and its sense—to the activity of interpreting—the process of sense-making' (Mailloux 1990, 124). Now, Weick may (or may not) be right to claim that Mailloux's 'sense-making' (in literary studies) is not Weick's 'sensemaking' (in organizations), but a good scholar would use this sentence as a way into that problem—a way of getting the issue squarely on the table. A good scholar would acknowledge that his foil uses the same term, namely, 'sense-making,' to describe the very thing he is trying to distance himself from, namely, interpretation. (Basbøll 2010, p. 171)

The quality of Weick's scholarship is not at issue here—the point is to underline that Weick's understanding of interpretation is particularly narrow and to consider the implication of this flaw for sensemaking theory—Basbøll's criticism uncovers the difficulty Weick had in presenting organisational sensemaking as something different from interpretation. In one sense, he made difficult work of something light. The way Weick unpacks this issue confuses it further, but as shown earlier there are many ways to approach the problem of meaning. What is patently clear from Weick's efforts to establish a scope for his concept of sensemaking, is that he is ignorant of the philosophical hermeneutic tradition and holds a very narrow understanding of hermeneutics as text-interpretation.

4.4 Intellectual antecedents of sensemaking

This section considers specifically the traces of philosophical hermeneutics found in organisational sensemaking in an already digested form via interpretive sociology (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Schutz 1967; Schutz and Luckmann 1974) and ethnomethodology (Garfinkel 1967), as well as the references to Heidegger via other writers (Weick 1995, p. 90). The picture that emerges of organisational sensemaking is one of drawing together insights from social psychology and cognitive dissonance theory, including most of the empirical support that Weick uses as a basis for his theory, combined with a legacy that Weick claims in Heidegger, via the interpretive sociology of Schutz and Mead, the ethnomethodology of Garfinkel and Goffman's frame analysis that together provide a social constructionist picture of organisational cognition. Whilst many of these theorists were no doubt influenced by phenomenology and hermeneutics, it will become clear that the way they think about meaning, interpretation, and understanding is of a very different character.

The concept of sensemaking has been used in psychology since the seventies (Craig-Lees 2001, p. 517), but it was used to indicate an activity by individuals in a social context. Weick's contribution was to apply the concept on the level of organisations, thus moving from individual to or-

ganisational sensemaking. He linked it with organising by observing that the cognitive organisation required to make sense shapes and is shaped by management's attempts to organise the actions of organisational members (Weick 1995, p. 82).

Weick's intellectual roots can be inferred from the way he introduces the notion of sensemaking. He recounts how he got interested in organisational sensemaking through conversing with Harold Garfinkel and Harold Pepinsky (Weick 1995, p. 10). Then he introduces the concept of retrospective rationalisation by referring to Garfinkel's ethnomethodological study of jury behaviour (Garfinkel 1967). The occasions demanding sense to be made are developed with the help of Leon Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957). Thereafter he lists ten studies that link ideas from ethnomethodology with various psychological studies that defer to cognitive dissonance theory. According to Weick (1995, p. 11), "what is shared by these diverse ideas is a common set of emphases that can be traced back to dissonance theory" and "…there are hints of these strands in ethnomethodological accounts of decision making in everyday life"(Weick 1995, p. 12). This dual heritage is presented as sensemaking's strong-point: "What makes current thinking about sensemaking robust is that both ethnomethodology and dissonance theory still inform some of the core ideas. Furthermore, both perspectives share common ideas" (Weick 1995, p. 13). The following subsections will describe the antecedent ideas that Weick says informs sensemaking's core.

4.4.1 Festinger: Cognitive dissonance theory

Cognitive dissonance theory is a foundational theory in social psychology and remarkable in that fifty years after its formulation it still draws research and elaboration. Harmon-Jones and Harmon-Jones (2007) provide a review and assessment of the theoretical developments and empirical program of cognitive dissonance. They show that although the original theory was revised over the years, the major revisions have been challenged by recent research and that the most promising modern tweak is the action-based

model of dissonance, which agrees with the original claim of Festinger that inconsistencies cause dissonance that in turn trigger dissonance reduction behaviours, but also seeks to tackle the question of why inconsistencies cause dissonance.

Weick, writing more than a decade earlier than Harmon-Jones, followed the original theory and the self-consistency and self-affirmation revisions (as opposed to the aversive consequences school). Whilst sensemaking is an ongoing background achievement, Weick (1995, pp. 84–85) points to the shock of dissonance as a trigger for active and directed sensemaking. Also, in his discussion of the property of identity construction, Weick (1995, p. 23) claims that the failure to confirm one's self is a trigger point for deliberate sensemaking that takes place to reduce dissonance and maintaining a consistent self-conception. Weick (1995, p. 23) cites Steele (1988), a proponent of the self-affirmation view of cognitive dissonance, in support of these claims. In his experiments Steele (1988) showed that for participants that were forced into a situation of dissonance, but afterwards given a chance to affirm a value of importance to their self-conception, there were no dissonance-related attitude changes. Steele's work follows that of Aronson (1968) who developed his self-consistency theory of cognitive dissonance as a modification of Festinger's original theory which stated that dissonance had to do with inconsistent cognitions. In Aronson's version, dissonance is not a matter of mismatched cognitions, but of a mismatch between actions and a particular self-esteem. The assumption is that most people try to maintain a positive self-concept and that people experience the emotional discomfort of dissonance when they behave contrary to this self-concept.[1]

4.4.2 Heidegger: Understanding as a mode of being

In support of making the point that sensemaking is an ongoing activity that never truly starts or stops, Weick invokes Dilthey and Heidegger (Weick

[1]Harmon-Jones and Harmon-Jones (2007, pp. 9–10) reports that in the 1990s research produced evidence in support of explanations of Steele's findings that agree more with Festinger's version of the theory, in addition results have been produced that are hard to explain with the self-affirmation or self-consistency versions of dissonance theory.

1995, p. 43). However he does not deal with Heidegger first-hand, instead preferring Heidegger's ideas in an already interpreted form in the work of Winograd and Flores (1986) saying that they "make a similar point [as Burrell and Morgan made about Dilthey's hermeneutic circle] in their gloss of Heidegger's idea that people find themselves thrown into ongoing situations and have to make do if they want to make sense of what's happening" (Weick 1995, pp. 43–44). Weick is talking about the continuous character of the automatic form of sensemaking (the kind of mutual intelligibility assumed by participants in the life-world) that is generally a background achievement and is only subject to scrutiny when some shock, break, or adverse result interrupts this automatic character and one must switch to controlled and directed sensemaking aimed at restoring the coherence. To understand the structure of sensemaking it is instructive to consider the moments of interruption because they will highlight the ways in which people restore a puzzling moment to meaningful normality. This is indeed a point Heidegger would make too: the world is only revealed to us when things go awry.

We've seen that Heidegger's ideas were important for the shift in philosophical hermeneutics of the problem of understanding from a question of epistemology to one of ontology. It is also possible to read Heidegger into much of sensemaking, however Weick only explicitly invokes Heidegger's idea of thrownness and then in service of a different point from the one Heidegger wants to make. This could be due to the fact that Weick deals with Heidegger via Winograd and Flores (1986) and they were specifically interested in the thrownness concept of Heidegger which they applied to the problems faced by software designers. The "thrownness" (*Geworfenheit*) concept of Heidegger tries to capture the idea that understanding is a mode of being given the finite nature of existence (being-in-the-world). Matter-of-factly we exist before we have the conceptual tools available to reflect on the fact that we exist. But this situation is only a starting point for Heidegger, he sees the possibility of freedom in this situation, because our ability to understand makes it possible for us to transcend this condition of thrownness through acting authentically in the world and so projecting our potential.

Although this is the only acknowledged link to Heidegger to be found in Weick's book, the Heidegger's depiction of *Dasein* as continual 'disclosure' or becoming (as opposed to static being) shares Weick's preference for verbs rather than nouns in his theory of organisational sensemaking—when talking about organis*ing* rather than organisation, sense*making*, and emphasising that identity is *construction*. However, the parallels between sensemaking theory and Heidegger's philosophy are probably due to the influence of Heidegger on Schutz's phenomenology of the social world—a theorist that is much more explicitly relied upon by Weick. Weick draws demonstrably, even though haphazardly, on ideas of exponents of process philosophy in American pragmatism that also influenced the social constructionist tradition in which Shutz stands. Selected examples of writers in this tradition follow in the next section.

4.4.3 Mead: Pragmatism and process philosophy

The emphasis on enactment and the active language of organisational sensemaking theory probably derives from the influence of various exponents of process philosophy, rather than directly from Heidegger. To be clear, Weick nowhere explicitly acknowledges process philosophy as an inspiration, however references to various process philosophers and their precursors are in evidence throughout his work, for example: James (Weick 1995, pp. 26, 38, 49, 54, 65, 81, 139), Mead (Weick 1995, pp. 18, 26, 41, 66, 107, 139), Hartshorne (Weick 1995, pp. 24, 25), and Pirsig (cited via Winokur, 1990) (Weick 1995, pp. 24, 25) are found in Weick's description of the properties of sensemaking. What these writers share is a commitment to holism, process, and becoming that in the work of Whitehead and Hartshorne is labelled as 'process philosophy'. In their attempts to raise their project to a recognisable philosophical tradition the proponents of process philosophy reinterpreted the pragmatist philosophy of James, Dewey, and Mead with a focus on the relational and processual worldview that underlies it.[2]

[2]One should perhaps distinguish between self-professed process philosophers (including many theologians) of the American twentieth century and the earlier philosophers that inspired them and were appropriated by them. It is possible to retrospectively read

Weick (1995, p. 66) invokes "Mead, 1934 (Social process precedes individual mind)" as an important resource for sensemaking theory. When discussing the substance of sensemaking, preparing for his image of resources for sensemaking being vocabularies, Weick (1995, p. 107) relies on "Mead's observation that society precedes mind", as support for the point that the words that give individual meaning depends on being meaningful to a larger collective first.

When discussing the property of sensemaking as grounded in identity construction, Weick (1995, p. 18) starts with Mead's notion of personal identity as a 'parliament of selves' from which the most appropriate self is projected in the social context. The process aspect of Mead's notion of personal identity is found in the interaction between a person's response to a particular social situation and the self-image we have of ourselves as we imagine it through the eyes of other persons in the social situation. Mead (1934a, p. 174) uses the distinction between the "I" and the "me", where the "I" refers to my acting in the social context and the "me" refers to the socially constructed view I have of myself as how I think others see me. Mead (1934a) says,"The 'I' reacts to the self which arises through the taking of the attitudes of others. Through taking those attitudes we have introduced the 'me' and we react to it as an 'I'." It is easy to see why this is an attractive anchor-point for Weick's sensemaking theory, because there is no hard distinction between subjectivity (mind) and reality (world); instead identity is constructed in a process of interplay between the "I" and "me" that continually sweeps the social interactions (where the "I" acts) into an ongoing construction of the "me" only to be reconstructed by the enactments of the future "I".

Of the process philosophers, Mead is important for our purposes, because Weick's identity concept relies directly on Mead,[3] we will return to a more thoroughgoing consideration of Mead's identity concept in contrast

a concern with process into many earlier philosophers like Heraclitus or Plotinus, James or Mead, and Bergson or Heidegger.

[3]The influence of Mead's ideas on Weick's view of identity construction is described in section 5.4.

with Ricoeur's narrative identity at a later stage,[4] and Mead's ideas cast a shadow over the work of Schutz and interpretivist social science in general.

4.4.4 Schutz: Phenomenology of the social world

Interpretivists are committed to understanding the social world from the point of view of the social actors—in this commitment they are followers of Dilthey's commitment to understanding the meaning of social phenomena rather than explaining them. As far as they make this commitment, interpretivists also face Dilthey's challenge of trying to conduct a social science as objective interpretations that has as its raw material subjective meanings. Schwandt (1998, p. 224) notes various strategies that interpretivist and constructionist research paradigms adopted for dealing with this paradox, ranging from combining constructionist ideas with a form of social realism to a commitment to the judicious use of research methods to eliminate error without buying into the positivist assumptions of many empirical methods. Philosophical hermeneutics offer the advantage of dissolving the opposition of subjectivity and objectivity as apparent. Rather than seeking refuge in research methods or realist frameworks, philosophical hermeneutics find its refuge in ontology by arguing that being has a fundamentally hermeneutic aspect to it. Gadamer's arguments about linguisticality and historicality paint these conditions as constitutive of being: meaningful lived experience is both made possible by and limited by our language and history. With this as background, the way Schutz reinterpreted the operation of intersubjective understanding is instructive, because it throws light on the paradox noted by Allard-Poesi (2005) about the mismatch between sensemaking theory's commitment to the subjective meanings constructed by organisational members and the objective way those constructions are typically studied by researchers claiming to employ a sensemaking approach.

There is a parallel between the position of the classical hermeneuticists, like Betti and Hirsch, about the authorial intention determining the meaning of the text and the position of interpretivist social scientists—like

[4]This is covered in section 5.5 by way of an analysis by Ezzy (2005).

Schutz, Garfinkel, and Goffman—that consider the meaning of an action to be the subjective meaning of the actor. Weick follows the interpretivist social scientists in trying to study the sensemaking from the point of view of the actors themselves in a social science tradition in which this interpretivist commitment goes all the way back to Weber:

> We shall speak of 'action' insofar as the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to his behavior [...] Action is 'social' insofar as its subjective meaning takes account of the behavior of others and is thereby oriented in its course. (Weber 1968, p. 4)

In the naïve version, understanding the social world is simply seen as the social science equivalent of Schleiermacher's empathetic understanding and primarily a matter of putting oneself into the shoes of the social actor and thereby achieving an understanding of his or her actions as meaningful to him or her. However, Schutz gives us a phenomenological treatment of understanding where understanding is the process of recognising intersubjective meanings (that are clearly sensible to the social actors themselves) and the symbolic resources available in the social world for expressing, communicating, and calibrating those meanings intersubjectively. Schutz moved the meaning that interpretivist social scientists are interested in from the subjective meaning in the head of the actor to the intersubjective meanings in the social context. As a side-note—whether subjective or intersubjective—the meaning so fixed is the target of the interpretivist social scientists's analysis. From the previous chapter it should be clear that from the perspective of philosophical hermeneutics social actors cannot fix the meaning of their actions in this way, because their actions become autonomous and distanciated. It is therefore not enough to establish only the horizon of the action (what it meant for the actor); one also has to establish the horizon of the interpreter before attempting to fuse the two.

For Schutz the existence of the life-world, as an intelligible context for those taking part in it, show that people achieve everyday understanding

of each other's actions as a matter of course. He takes this everyday understanding of participants in the life-world as the model for social scientists trying to understand the social world too. Whilst Husserl, the source of Schutz's phenomenological inspiration, considered the proper strategy for understanding social phenomena to be reducing them to their intentional meanings to be found at the level of the transcendental ego, Schutz in contrast reduces social phenomena to the social world of human activity that give rise to them (Bauman 1992, p. 175). This "life-world" of human activity is a realm where people achieve sufficient mutual understandings as a matter of course and in a taken-for-granted way. The life-world is maintained as an ongoing intersubjective accomplishment and it becomes the task of the scientist to understand *how* people achieve this. With this move, Schutz legitimates Garfinkel's later interest in the "howness" as opposed to the "whatness" of the social world—the focus of his ethnomethodology.

Schutz's ideas about the nature of the life-world are foundational for Weick's sensemaking theory. The ongoing automatic quality of sensemaking and the importance of interruptions or shocks for switching to deliberate and focused sensemaking to restore meaningful coherence are all captured in the following quote from Schutz.

> *The transition from paramount reality to other finite provinces of meaning, experienced through a shock*
>
> The world of everyday life is taken for granted by our commonsense thinking and thus receives the accent of reality as long as our practical experiences prove the unity and congruity of this world as valid. Even more, this reality seems to us to be the natural one, and we are not ready to abandon our attitude toward it without having experienced a specific shock which compels us to break through the limits of these 'finite' provinces of meaning and to shift the accent of reality to another one. (Schutz, Natanson, and Breda 1972, pp. 343–344)

Weick fleshes the sensemaking implication of such shocks and interruptions out with the results of social psychological research into information

load (Weick 1995, pp. 86–87), autonomic arousal (Weick 1995, pp. 45–47) and the difference between ambiguity and uncertainty (Weick 1995, pp. 91–100); however the basic idea that our assumed understanding of the world requires a shock for us to perceive its constructed and fragile nature goes back to Schutz (and via him to Heidegger of course).

Consider also the retrospective property of sensemaking, where Weick explains that sensemaking requires that certain parts of the ongoing flow of experience (singular) should be selected, bracketed as discrete experiences (plural), and then connected to others in narrative unity (Weick 1995, page). In the original version of this point, Schutz explains the structure of the life-world for the subject in this way:

> Meaning is not a quality of certain lived experiences emerging distinctively in the stream of consciousness, that is to say, of the objectivities constituted within it. It is rather the result of my explication of past lived experiences which are grasped reflectively from an actual now and from an actually valid reference schema […] Lived experiences first become meaningful, then, when they are explicated *post hoc* and become comprehensible to me as well-circumscribed experiences. Thus only those lived experiences are subjectively meaningful which are memorially brought forth in their actuality, which are examined as regards their constitution, and which are explicated in respect to their position in a reference schema that is at hand. (Schutz and Luckmann 1974, pp. 15–16)

Meaning is then constituted in retrospect by a process of framing. Weick uses the concepts of frame and cues in a way equivalent to Schutz's use of the concepts reference schema (the frame) and world (the cues noticed in the world). Lived experiences are made meaningful by connecting present moments that are noticed and considered puzzling, with past moments remembered to be similar and that were successfully rendered meaningful. In organisational sensemaking the past moments of successful sense are the

frames used to connect the cues from the present moments to those past moments.

Schutz (1967, pp. 69–79) notes that lived experiences do not have meaning in themselves, but that meaning is found in the way experiences are regarded: "The meaning lies in the attitude of the Ego toward that part of its stream of consciousness which has already flowed by" (Schutz 1967, p. 69). However, many experiences are lived, yet not reflected upon and these remain "pre-phenomenal". Schutz explains the way we attend to lived experiences with the image of a cone of light that is shone on various objects, those lit by the light becoming visible and therefore meaningful, whilst those outside the cone remain invisible and unattended to.

> [We can] reject the position that meaningfulness pertains either to the noematic structure (i.e. the lived experience itself) or to the mere fact of belonging to the stream of duration. We shall say rather that each Act of attention to one's own stream of duration may be compared to a cone of light. This cone illuminates already elapsed individual phases of that stream, rendering them bright and sharply defined (and, as such, meaningful). (Schutz 1967, p. 70)

Weick (1995, p. 26) restates this argument, down to using the same image of the cone of light: "To understand how specific meanings arise retrospectively, think of the act of reflection as a cone of light that spreads backwards from a particular present. This cone of light will give definition to portions of lived experiences. Because the cone starts in the present, projects and feelings that are under way will affect the backward glance and what is seen (Schwartz, 1991)".[5] The example of the cone of light actually comes from Schutz (1967, p. 69), yet Weick repeats it with an ambigious citation to a paper by Schwartz entitled: "Social change and collective memory: The democratization of George Washington". The citation is ambiguous, because it is not clear whether Schwartz is to be credited with

[5]The reference to Schwartz is the citation in Weick's text.

the way in which the present affects the past or with the image of the cone of light, which comes straight from Schutz. Moreover, Weick then directly quotes and cites from two pages further in the same Schutz source in the very next sentence—"Thus, 'the meaning of a lived experience undergoes modifications depending on the particular kind of attention the Ego gives to the lived experience' (Schutz, 1967, p. 73)" (Weick 1995, p. 26).[6]

What is important for Schutz is establishing the typicality of objects and events in the life-world, because this typicality is the basis for transferring meaning between situations. Without some typicality, there won't be relevant reference schema to help relate future experiences to the meaningful past.

> Each step of my explication and understanding of the world is based at any given time on a stock of previous experience, my own immediate experiences as well as such experiences as are transmitted to me from my fellow-men and above all from my parents, teachers, and so on. All of these communicated and immediate experiences are included in a certain unity having the form of my stock of knowledge, which serves me as the reference schema for the actual step of my explication of the world. All of my experiences in the life-world are brought into relation to this schema, so that the objects and events in the life-world confront me from the outset in their typical character. (Schutz and Luckmann 1974, p. 7)

Weick is also interested in the stock of knowledge, in his case this is captured in "vocabularies of sensemaking" which are in fact various kinds of frames of reference (reference schema in the words of Schutz) built from previous sense made that can be employed in selecting and framing cues from current situations. Weick's frames-cues operate like Schutz's schema-world distinction, which Weick came to via Goffman's frame analysis (see section 4.4.6).

[6]The reference to Schutz is the citation by Weick.

From Schutz's study of the interpretive procedures in which meanings are being established in the world of everyday life a major implication is that intersubjective meaning is constructed and not discovered. For Schutz, there is no qualitative difference between what social actors do in the life-world when assigning meaning to their actions and what social scientists do when ascribing meaning to the actions of those actors. For both social actors and scientists it means that meaning is not a given that can be found or discovered, it is something to be made. This emphasis on meaning as made rather than discovered is the real point that Weick wanted to make with his distinction between sensemaking and interpretation.

4.4.5 Garfinkel: Ethnomethodology

Garfinkel (1967, p. 11) uses ethnomethodology to refer to "the investigation of the rational properties of indexical expressions and other practical actions as contingent ongoing accomplishments of organized artful practices of everyday life". The subject matter of his studies in ethnomethodology is everyday activities and his program is "by paying to the most commonplace activities of daily life the attention usually accorded extraordinary events, seek to learn about them as phenomena in their own right" (Garfinkel 1967, p. 1).

Garfinkel happened upon the term ethnomethodology while he was engaged with his study of jury behaviour that is also invoked by Weick as an instance of retrospective sensemaking. Garfinkel (1967, p. 110) noticed that "a person is 95 percent juror before he comes near the court", and that jurors overwhelmingly made use of common-sense reasons during their deliberations. With the term ethnomethodology he sought to capture this common-sense knowledge and associated mechanisms for ordinary people to make sense of and navigate the social situations they find themselves in.

Bauman (1992, p. 174) considered the phenomenological pedigree of ethnomethodology counter-intuitive, because the things that Garfinkel takes as the focus of his method are precisely the kind of things that Husserl's phenomenological reduction brackets out of consideration in order to get to

the essences of the phenomena. In the case of Garfinkel's ethnomethodology the question of essences falls by the wayside as the investigator tries to describe *how* humans do what they do, instead of engaging *what* they are substantively doing. Bauman (1992, p. 175) argues that this only became possible because of Schutz's reinterpretation of phenomenology, away from Husserl's reduction to a focus on *how* the intersubjective meaning that constitute our social world is mutually maintained by the participants.

Weick (1995, p. 11) relies on Garfinkel's ideas to develop the insight that sensemaking happens retrospectively. He also sees a link between the ethnomethodological idea that the clarification of human situations works in reverse from the outcome back to the 'prior' situation and the similar insight from cognitive dissonance theory that dissonance reduction often works by revising cognitive commitments retrospectively. Weick (1995, pp. 10–11) quotes Garfinkel at length:

> In place of the view that decisions are made as the occasions require, an alternative formulation needs to be entertained. It consists of the possibility that the person defines retrospectively the decisions that have been made. The outcome comes before the decision. In the material reported here, jurors did not actually have an understanding of the conditions that defined a correct decision until after the decision had been made. Only in retrospect did they decide what they did that made their decisions the correct ones. When the outcome was in hand they went back to find the "why," the things that led up to the outcome…If the above description is accurate, decision making in daily life would thereby have, as a critical feature, the decision maker's task of justifying a course of action…[Decision making in daily life] may be much more preoccupied with the problem of assigning outcomes their legitimate history than with questions of deciding before the actual occasion of choice the conditions under which one, among a set of alternative possible courses of action, will be elected. (Garfinkel 1967, pp. 114–115)

The aim of this retrospective rationalisation could be seen as dissonance reduction in the search for coherence, but it is also a matter of establishing plausibility. Weick (1995, p. 10) relies on another quote from Garfinkel (1967, p. 106): "If the interpretation makes good sense, then that's what happened". In this way, Weick connects social psychological ideas from cognitive dissonance to the interpretive tradition running from Schutz to the ethnomethodology of Garfinkel. Weick depends on these interpretivist and social constructionist ideas to elevate the sensemaking concept from its individualist origins in social psychology to his reinterpretation of it as a social concept useful for understanding a collective phenomenon, namely organisational sensemaking.

4.4.6 Goffman: Frame analysis

Weick (1995, pp. 35, 51) cites the work by Goffman (1974) on "Frame Analysis" as inspiration. According to Weick the frame concept from Goffman is "used as shorthand for the structure of the context" (Weick 1995, p. 51). It is the context that determines what is extracted as cues and how those cues are interpreted. Jameson (1976, p. 120) sees Goffman's frame analysis as the "semiotization of ethnomethodology" which takes Garfinkel's ethnomethodology back to its roots in Schutz's interpretive sociology by moving beyond the analysis of social reality as texts to providing statements about the structure of that reality itself. However, where Goffman departs from Schutz is where Schutz insists on the intersubjective nature of meaning, whilst for Goffman meaning is found in the structure provided by the framing of cues, rather than in the interaction between people. Goffman is interested in "the structure of experience individuals have at any moment of their social lives" (Goffman 1974, p. 13) and believes that the structure can be isolated as the basic frameworks used by people to give meaning to their social situation.

In a largely negative review, Denzin and Keller (1981) argues that Goffman's frame analysis is trivial and peripheral to a proper understanding of social interaction. Their major criticism is that Goffman's "frames are

frozen forms. His concept of reality is illusive and blurred" (Denzin and Keller 1981, p. 59). They essentially bemoan the lack of attention to social interaction and therefore find Goffman's work, despite its claim to the contrary, to be antithetical to the interpretive tradition in the vein of Schutz and Mead (Denzin and Keller 1981, p. 57). Today, frame analysis primarily has currency in political science, for instance, in the area of social movement research and communication studies, typically analysing the ways the news media and lobby groups construct and politicise issues, for example, the work by Snow et al. (1986). Nevertheless, Goffman's work on frame analysis is at the core of Weick's sensemaking theory, since the framing metaphor is the way Weick explains the actual operation of sensemaking: to make sense is to select and frame cues in a way that successfully connects and elaborates them into a plausible coherence sufficient for actors to continue their ongoing projects. In the next section we'll compare Weick's sensemaking through the framing of selected cues to the philosophical hermeneutic event of coming to understanding.

4.5 Hermeneutic moment in sensemaking operations

How then is understanding achieved when sense is made the way Weick describes it? This section considers the four ways in which sense is made according to Weick—through the processes of arguing, expecting, committing, and manipulating (Weick 1995)—by imposing frames on ongoing flows and the enactment-selection-retention-process of organisational sensemaking (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld 2005). The idea is to show that the raw material of the substantive parts of Weick's theory do not consider the problem of understanding and interpretation very deeply, and to contrast Weick's metaphor of framing of cues as a minimal sensible structure with Gadamer's metaphor of the fusion of horizons.

4.5.1 Interpretation as framing

Interpretation for Weick consist of the framing of cues. What Weick considers being the minimum that is necessary to make sense was described in section 2.2.2. For him the basic unit of meaning is a cue in relation to a frame. The frame both selects the cue and gives it context. As we've seen in the section about minimal sensible structures, cues are the stimuli from present events that gets noticed, either because they are too salient to ignore, or because the particular framing brings them into view. This act of framing is what connects previous rounds of sense made—now captured in the content of the frames—with the puzzling new information present as cues that need to be made sensible.

> The content of sensemaking is to be found in the frames and categories that summarize past experience, in the cues and labels that snare specifics of present experience, and in the ways these two settings of experience are connected. What is common among the diverse vocabularies of organizational sensemaking, such as ideology, third-order controls, paradigms, theories of action, traditions and stories is that all of them describe either past moments, present moments or connections. (Weick 1995, p. 111)

In this scheme, appropriate framing, or deciding between alternative framings, is more consequential for the eventual sense made than the ways in which a particular frame selects particular cues and connects them to each other and to the past. Once a particular frame is operating, it brackets out alternative ways of seeing. The more appropriate the framing and the more coherent the sense that is made from it, the less the possibility of even considering a different framing possible or needed. Since different frames are presumably available in organisations, the ability to temporarily "fix" a particular framing as legitimate is the crucial skill in achieving mastery over the sense made. Weick (1995, p. 9) underscores the importance of

the choice of frame, by citing an example from Schön about how problem solving is determined by the problem setting phase:

> When we set the problem, we select what we will treat as the 'things' of the situation, we set the boundaries of our attention to it, and we impose upon it a coherence which allows us to say what is wrong and directions the situation needs to be changed. Problem setting is a process which, interactively, we name the things to which we will attend and frame the context in which we'll attend to them. (Schön 1983, p. 40)

Then another example Weick (1995, p. 10) from Thayer (1988) about leadership as sense-giving by guiding or changing the way in which followers see themselves and their world by giving it "a different form, a different face" (Weick 1995, p. 10). In other words, leaders are those individuals who can change the way followers see themselves and their projects by framing it plausibly.

An interpreter might have a set of alternative frames each emphasising different available cues and leading to different sensible outcomes. Furthermore, the cues themselves are equivocal and can support alternate meanings depending on how they are framed. This represents an interpretive moment where the appropriateness of a particular framing is consequential for the eventual sense made. One way of seeing this operation is that once a frame is invoked, the sense stitched from that particular framing of cues is more or less overdetermined and that the choice between alternative frames and their perceived relevance becomes the defining interpretive moment. In fact, alternate framings (or what Goffman (1974) would call 'frame shifts'), are the only ways in which, from the point of view of the sensemaker, the existence of the frame becomes apparent. In Weick's view, we only become aware of the frame in use when some incongruity forces us to shift from one frame to another.

At this point, we can consider the implications of this framing metaphor for the kind of interpretations that Weick considers part of sensemaking. The framing metaphor assumes there is stuff around to be framed and

frames available with which to contextualise the stuff that we encounter. It is best seen as a constant flow of potential stimuli, the majority of which passes by without being noticed, whilst a small minority of these stimuli are noticed, then selected as relevant, and brought into relation with other aspects deemed relevant. Social reality is conceived of as a flow of potentiality, but with no independently existing meaningfulness out there to be discovered or represented, which is then ordered and made meaningful by the act of noticing, selecting, and framing. Weick follows Goffman (1974) with the language of frames and cues, but this is the usual interpretive distinction between schema and world, where the world is the source of data and the schema is the theory with which the data are selected and interpreted.

The frame is the relatively more fixed side in the process of understanding and to a large extent it is the framing that determines which stimuli are noticed and elaborated into cues that are connected to other cues to form a coherent tapestry. The phenomenon to be understood is much more fluid and conceptualised as stimuli, some of which might be noticed and selected as cues, but even these cues are equivocal until fixed by the frame. The frames are not fixed forever, they do get updated over time, but considered relative to the fleeting cues consisting of the selected stimuli, the frames are relatively stable. The process of updating the frames is an incremental one and not a necessary consequence of a particular framing moment because the sense made of a puzzling situation might be of a confirmatory nature. Furthermore, the notion of multiple alternate frames suggest that when confronted with resistant cues, frame shifts are more likely than frame updating.

Contrasting this framing metaphor with that of the fusion of horizons, in Gadamer's metaphor of the fusion of horizons, understanding is not just interpreting in context, understanding has a dialogical character and has connotations of agreement (akin to 'understanding each other'). This means that the interpreter's horizon and the horizon of that which is to be understood are equal partners in the process of coming to understanding. Unlike the framing metaphor where the one side in the process is definitely more

fixed and is imposed on the other, in the Gadamer version horizons can only fuse when both of them move closer to each other. In other words, rather than imposing an interpretive frame on a puzzling situation, there is no understanding that does not also change the one who seeks to understand. In the framing metaphor the subject is framing the object in an attempt to come to an understanding of that object. The onus rests on the subject seeking understanding to bring particular frames and associated methods to bear on the object. In contrast, the Gadamer version emphasise the extent to which the subject matter (or the object to be understood according to the frame metaphor), challenges the interpreter, in a situation where the subject-object roles are in a sense reversed in situations of deep engagement where the work reveals itself to an engaged observer, instead of being manipulated or dissected by an investigator.

4.5.2 Belief- and action-driven processes as framing actions

Organisational sensemaking in practice happens in belief- and action-driven processes. The way Weick describes concretely how frames are imposed in organisations through the activities of arguing, expecting, committing, and manipulating was covered in section 2.3. The difference between Weick's description of these operational aspects of organisational sensemaking and a philosophical hermeneutics description of how understanding comes about can now be investigated.

In organisational sensemaking all the processes are instances of connecting beliefs to actions. The difference between belief- and action-driven processes is the starting point; either one starts at the beliefs and then take actions that make those beliefs true, or one acts and then retrospectively modifies the beliefs to legitimate the actions. What Weick describes is how beliefs frame actions and how actions calls forth an appropriate frame from the variety of frames available. Whilst sensemaking is ongoing, Weick is here describing specific instances where sensemaking is not automatic. The sensemaking happens when the connection is made between the frame and

the cues; said differently, sensemaking happens when beliefs and actions are connected and are no longer dissonant.

4.5.3 The interpretive triggerpoint

Whereas organisational sensemaking sees cognitive dissonance as an activator for deliberate focused sensemaking, philosophical hermeneutics talks of the "hermeneutic differential" (Keane and Lawn 2016, p. 246) as a requirement for interpretation. Hermeneutical understanding remains an ever-present task only because of the existence of difference. This seems counter-intuitive, because we've seen that Gadamer argued for understanding as agreement. Does agreement not signify sameness rather than difference? Gadamer's agreement is the point where understanding is reached. However, the starting point is one of difference, without difference there will be no need to even start interpreting. The moments that count for hermeneutic insights are the ones where we realise that the text is not saying what we thought it said, or where we realise that what the other person is saying does not agree with us, and for this reason our pre-understanding is exposed as deficient. In other words, we can no longer think about the other (or the work or text) the same way we did before engaging with them or it. Furthermore, once agreement is reached through the fusion of horizons, difference comes into play again; not only do I now see the other differently, I've also become different from who I was before engaging.

There seems to be convergence here. Both organisational sensemaking and philosophical hermeneutics realise that it is a mismatch that asks for interpretation—there must be dissonance to be resolved and resolving it must matter—turned around interpreting requires a mismatch. The divergence is found at the two perspectives's proposals for handling the mismatch that requires explaining. Organisational sensemaking, true to its social psychological roots, follows cognitive dissonance theory and dissolves the one into the other: Either actions are taken to make the beliefs true, or beliefs are changed to legitimate actions already taken. Philosophical hermeneutics resolves the difference by a fusion of horizons of understanding which

not only implies initial constitutive entanglement, but also requires both sides of the engagement to move towards a new vantage point.

4.5.4 The relation between understanding and application

Furthermore, beliefs and actions are not so neatly separable in philosophical hermeneutics. There is no understanding separate from our doing in the world. What we learn from our engagement is not just a result of the content that we encounter, but the nature of the encounter itself colours our understanding. Along this route towards understanding we may fail many times and come up with interpretations that transpire to be wanting in hindsight. Whilst that would constitute a sensemaking failure, it is an opportunity to learn from the perspective of philosophical hermeneutics. To be clear, philosophical hermeneutics does not suggest that we deliberately seek out misunderstanding, rather in our effort to understand deeply we need to engage with an attitude of openness and this entails the inevitable risk that we may fail and perhaps not understand at all. In contrast to the depiction of understanding by philosophical hermeneutics as a unitary event, organisational sensemaking processes consists of either acting in order to make sense, or of making sense in order to act on it.

4.5.5 Perspectivism and interpretation

The possibility of alternative explanations and competing views on a matter is another point of divergence. Consider Nietzsche's perspectivism: "There is only a seeing from a perspective, only a 'knowing' from a perspective, and the more emotions we express over a thing, the more eyes, different eyes, we train on the same thing, the more complete will be our 'idea' of that thing, our 'objectivity' "(Nietzsche 1921, p. 123). What Nietzsche describes is similar to the ancient Hindu parable (Goldstein 2010, p. 492) of the six blind men and the elephant where each only feels part of the elephant and therefore disagree. The lesson is of course that if they put their

partial perspectives together, they might be able to identify the whole correctly. This might be transposed to hermeneutics with the statement that the more interpretations we get about something, the better our overall understanding. For organisational sensemaking the more frames we have access to; the greater the number of situations that we can make sense of. It is the difference between a collage of different perspectives attempting to come to a more complete understanding of the whole and selecting from a repository of available perspectives for the one that best fit the situation to be understood. In the first version multiple interpretations (framings) provides us with a more rounded view of the subject matter, in the second version the availability of multiple frames makes a plausible matching more likely. The first involves multiple takes and shifting viewpoints, the second relies on requisite variety to achieve a plausible (good-enough) interpretation so that an interrupted project can proceed (and once sense is restored further framing attempts are no longer undertaken). Of course, in the context of organisations the view from philosophical hermeneutics will caution us to slow down because reflection requires temporal distance and opportunity for reinterpretation and refinement; whilst organisational sensemaking will point out that organisational life does not afford this luxury of taking the time for trying out reinterpretations, and nuancing them with refinements, because, more often than not, action is demanded before consensus is reached.

4.5.6 The completeness of understanding

Hermeneutic commitment to our finitude means that understanding is always incomplete. There is no definitive understanding that holds forever. This does not however mean that all interpretations are of equal value, because even in the absence of a final correct interpretation there may still be some interpretations that are better than others. Sensemaking deflects the issue of an objective understanding by turning it into a non-issue. According to organisational sensemaking accuracy is not the goal of sensemaking, but plausibility. Plausible sense might be completely inaccurate, but sen-

sible enough in a particular time and place to a particular group of people to enable them to continue their ongoing projects.[7] Whilst sensemaking theory plays down the importance of the question of the completeness of our understanding by settling for a pragmatic plausibility, philosophical hermeneutics stresses the freedom associated with a continual process of reinterpretation.

4.5.7 The involvement of the interpreter

Organisational sensemaking and philosophical hermeneutics challenge the realist-objectivist view of knowledge being attainable in principle separate from the knower. Philosophical hermeneutics holds that not only is the the pre-understanding of the interpreter indispensable, but also the participation of the interpreter with an attitude of openness is essential to let the world of the text or the work speak. Whilst the frames and various vocabularies of sense that the sensemaker brings to the puzzling situation more or less equate with the pre-understanding or horizon of interpreter in philosophical hermeneutics, enactment is in a sense a more active sense of involvement of the sensemaker in the sense made. When people are in a situation of turbulence where no sensible patterns can be discerned, enactment happens when they probe the situation—by acting first and then sensing the response—which in some cases acts like an attractor around which a sensible pattern might emerge.[8] In the case of sensemaking, enactment is always a pre-rational moment that generates what is to be interpreted. Put in Weick's words, enactment generates what is to be interpreted through framing; hence the enactment-selection-retention process of organisational sensemaking. In contrast, from the perspective of philosophical hermeneutics, understanding is not a multi-step process; instead the involvement of the interpreter is a prerequisite for the event of understanding to take place.

[7] Weick (1995, p. 55) uses the example of people finding their way only to discover that they did it with the wrong map.

[8] Snowden (2003) explains the act-sense-respond strategy for the chaotic quadrant in his model using sensemaking concepts in this way (in conjunction with ideas from complexity science).

4.6 Sensemaking as special constructionism

4.6.1 Rooted in positivism

Weick (1995, pp. 65–69) devotes four pages to a list of studies that in his opinion are significant antecedents to the concerns of organisational sensemaking. These are presented chronologically along with annotations interpreting the particular study's significance in the development of the organisational sensemaking view that ultimately culminates in Weick's theory. Once the organisation and management writers are removed from this list, it becomes clear that cognitive dissonance, social psychology, ethnomethodology, symbolic interactionism, and social constructionism are the primary theoretical streams that flow into sensemaking.[9]

From this and the previous section it is clear that Weick is situating organisational sensemaking as a social constructionist theory of organisation. However, I propose that organisational sensemaking theory, as it is conceptualised by Weick, is a special form of constructionism, because it is rooted in uncritical positivism. Weick relies on experimental psychological research to explain the mechanism of construction. This is evident throughout *Sensemaking in Organizations* and examples include: Bavelas's cells study (p. 83),[10] Garfinkel's jury study (p. 10), Mandler's study on autonomic arousal (p. 101), Milgram's obedience study (p. 97),[11] Smith's study of buyer uncertainty at auctions (p. 98), and Rosenthal and Jacobsen's "Pygmalion in the Classroom" experiment (p. 148), are examples of the positivist-empirical evidence invoked in service of Weick's constructionist position.

[9]The following writers are the non-organisational writers on Weick's list of influences: James, 1890; Mead, 1934; Deutsch and Gerard, 1955; Festinger, 1957; Dalton, 1959; Schutz, 1967; Garfinkel, 1967; Berger and Luckmann, 1967; Giddens, 1976.

[10]Weick does not deal first-hand with Bavelas's work, but via a popular book by P. Watzlawick (1976). *How real is real? Confusion, disinformation, communication.* New York: Random House. Watzlawick does not reference a particular publication of Bavelas, but recounts the story about the cell study with the note "Alex Bavelas, personal communication".

[11]Griggs and Whitehead (2015) lists a number of modern criticisms of this infamous study which call into question the validity of its results.

Recall from chapter 2, how in his earlier work, *The Social Psychology of Organizing* (Weick 1979), Weick relied on social psychological research conducted in laboratory settings to establish his conception of social behaviour: Allport (1962) is used for evidence about collective action, Wallace (1961) for mutual equivalence structures, Kelley et al. (1962) and Rabinowitz, Kelley, and Rosenblatt (1966) provided experimental evidence about the minimal social situation in laboratory contexts, Kiesler (1971) provides empirical evidence about the psychology of commitment to actions, and Staw (1982, p. 103) provides a refinement regarding the effort and volition behind actions taken.

Similarly, in the section in *Sensemaking in Organizations* (Weick 1995) where he wanted to establish the parameters of minimal sensible structures, he relied on social psychological research by Duncan (1972) about perceived environmental uncertainty, Huber and Daft (1987) about the effect of information load, and on experiments by Louis and Sutton (1991) to establish the difference between automatic and controlled information processing. From the preceding it is clear that Weick's theorising consists of integrating secondary data in a confirmatory way, rather than start from problems and inconsistencies found in data and developing theory to account for those.

4.6.2 Uncritical constructionism

Being rooted in positivism is not the only characteristic that makes sensemaking a special type of constructionism. Earlier it was shown how Weick's theory drew upon a certain version of cognitive dissonance and aspects of interpretivism following Shutz and Garfinkel. The combination with dissonance reduction as primarily cognitive work, making inconsistencies fit with what is coherent and therefore sensible, leads Weick to a constructionist position. The social aspect of that constructionism moderates the eventual sense made—its intersubjective character is what saves it from capriciousness and relativism. However, coming to a social constructionist conclusion via this route, means that Weick's version lacks some of the central commitments of typical constructionist views. Social constructionist

studies typically have a critical or emancipatory character (Maines 2000). Constructionism is usually invoked to demonstrate that certain phenomena are not inscribed into the order of things, but were socially constructed. Typically a constructionist study seeks to demonstrate how 'things' like race, nationalism, gender, et cetera have been constructed over time, and then use this deconstructive analysis to be critical of what is considered an ideological reification. However, in the case of organisational sensemaking the combination of constructionism and cognitive theories is ultimately intended to provide insights for research and suggestions for management based on an understanding of how participants construct the organisation (Weick 1995, chap. 8).

4.7 Conclusion

The early model of organisational sensemaking that focused on enactment-selection-retention (Weick 1979), took as its centrepiece the idea of enactment. The later theory (Weick 1995) moved in the direction of a more holistic consideration of issues of understanding. With this move Weick came closer to studying organisational cognition the way philosophical hermeneutics would, but at some cost. It is clear that Weick did not explicitly use hermeneutics, in fact Weick uses a particularly narrow understanding of hermeneutics as interpretive technique as a foil for explaining the constructive and enactive character of sensemaking. Whilst there are traces of hermeneutics in sensemaking, however it is a particular type of hermeneutics where the problem of understanding is dissolved and many issues left unaddressed. In the actual operation of sensemaking we could see that the theoretical resources for understanding the various ways of imposing frames on ongoing flows are from psychological experiments and not from interpretive ways of thinking. Sensemaking is best thought of as a special type of social constructionism—one that's rooted in positivist psychological science and is, atypically for constructionist accounts, uncritical in character. The reason for this is not only Weick's noted a-political stance, but likely the route Weick took to arrive at a constructionist conclusion, by way of the

particular interpretivist origins in the work of Schutz and Garfinkel.

Together the analyses in this chapter showed that, although philosophical hermeneutics ideas can be read into Weick's theory of sensemaking, ideas emanating from micro-interactionist, social constructionist, and social psychological considerations are far more influential in the actual operation of organisational sensemaking as described by Weick. As we have seen in the preceding sections, Weick tried to address the deeper issues of understanding from these interpretive sociological and social psychological starting points. However, Weick could have moved further and addressed the question of organisational meaning with insights from philosophical hermeneutics. However, Weick's original approach around enactment-selection-retention rather than the larger organisational sensemaking as organisational cognition, contains much that is useful for thinking about understanding in organisations. The question is whether it is possible to combine parts of the earlier Weick with the answers of philosophical hermeneutics to the organisational questions that come up when enactment is taken seriously as a feature of organising.

Chapter 5

Narrativity and Identity

The previous chapters showed that there are inconsistencies in Weick's sensemaking theory that could be addressed from the perspective of philosophical hermeneutics. However, since Weick's theory is a grand theory in the sense that it touches all aspects of the phenomenon of organisation and the activity of organising, it is hard to concretely demonstrate the potential benefit of philosophical hermeneutics to the theory of sensemaking without an appropriate site. For this reason, this chapter turns to the description of a particular organisational research field as a concrete context where a comparison between sensemaking and philosophical hermeneutics can be done and within which the desirability and feasibility for integration can be considered. For this purpose the particular field of organisational identity was selected and will be described in an overview of seven theoretical positions found in the literature. The current state of theory and research in this field will be a useful background against which to consider Weickean (organisational sensemaking) and Ricoeurian (philosophical hermeneutic) approaches to identity, because the issue of identity is an important resource for sensemaking processes (indeed, Weick says that sensemaking is grounded in identity construction) and the concept of a narrative identity was worked out in philosophical hermeneutic terms by Ricoeur. Moreover of the various theoretical perspectives extant in the field, many draw inspiration from Weick and Ricoeur.

5.1 Narrativity and Organisation

Before we can properly consider identity we need some background about narrative inquiry in organisation and management studies, then consider the role of narrative in sensemaking theory, before we can turn to why narrative matters for hermeneutics. Only with this background established, can we consider Ricoeur's account of narrative identity.

Bruner (1991, p. 4) claims that we "organize our experience and our memory of human happenings mainly in the form of narrative". Bruner identified narrative as a mode of thought juxtaposed with the paradigmatic mode of thought prevalent in argument and science. On the basis of this distinction Weick (1995, p. 127) considers the implication for management that the narrative mode of thought is the one in which organisational life is experienced and made sensible, whilst all of management and administrative science, as well as organisational arrangements, forms, and procedures, are expressed in the paradigmatic mode. No wonder then that organisations often experience the paralysis of non-sense when faced with change and complexity.

There are two paths along which the notion of narrative in organisations can be explored. Analogous to Ricoeur's distinction between text and textuality, we can differentiate between them as being the path of *narrative(s)* as opposed to that of *narrativity*. The former refers to narrative accounts (which we cognitively access through *acts* of interpretation), the latter refers to the human cognitive *capacity*, rooted in human agency, to construct a meaningful social reality. The former is studied through narratology, literary theory, semiotics, or suchlike text-orientated sciences. The latter is the preserve of sensemaking theory, social constructionism, and hermeneutics. The next sections will show the extent to which narrativity thus conceptualised is under-theorised in organisational sensemaking theory and offer a glimpse of the depth of theorisation offered in Ricoeur's hermeneutics. The argument is that whereas Weick considers stories as a component of his sensemaking theory—as one of various vocabularies of sensemaking—insights from Ricoeur's work on narrative and time suggests

that narrativity alongside identity construction and enactment should have been the constitutive elements of sensemaking theory, rather than dissonance reduction and framing. In the case of the particular organisational issue we are considering in this chapter, namely organisational identity, Ricoeur's concept of narrative identity is particularly helpful.

5.1.1 Narrative inquiry in organisation studies

In recent times organisations have become objects of study from the point of narrative, in particular in view of the claim as expressed by Bruner (1991, p. 4). The complex collective we call 'organisation' is indeed a fertile ground for the development—and study—of narrative(s). Up to now, however, research in this area has by and large followed the first pathway and only relied on narratology, literary theory, or semiotics. Such research, no doubt, has contributed much to our understanding of narrative *in* organisations, but little to our understanding of how narrativity functions in the organisational construction of social reality. To phrase this in a popular way: we know much about stories *in organisations*, but little about the story *of organisation* and even less about *organisation as* story. The primary limitation of using, broadly speaking, a narratological approach is that it allows access to and an understanding of *only* the textual outputs of organisations, which in many respects may be deemed peripheral to the organisational dynamic (story) itself. Organisations are much more than, or perhaps even different from, the texts they produce. To understand the core dynamics of organisations, we need more sophisticated modes of analysis and understanding. This study proposes that narrativity—when understood within the parameters of sensemaking theory—provides us with such a mode of analysis and understanding.

Whilst narrative has been the subject of academic inquiry for a very long time, research on narrative as a phenomenon in organisations and organisation theory is relatively recent—the earliest publication on narratives in organisation date from the mid-seventies to early-eighties (Martin 1982; Mitroff 1975; Mitroff and Kilmann 1976; Wilkins 1983; Wilkins 1984). Since

then, there has been a mushrooming of literature on various 'narrative approaches' to the study of organisations, with overviews of the field provided by Boyce (1996) and Rhodes and Brown (2005). These narrative approaches cover a wide range of organisational phenomena and areas, but what they share is the assumption that narrative is a transparent medium through which researchers gain access to facets of organisational reality that may remain hidden when using normal social research methods. In other words, narrative is seen as a medium and narrative method as a technique for dealing with this medium. Narrative methods were developed as a qualitative research method for studying organisations.[1] But narratives in organisations were soon studied as a phenomenon in itself and not only used as a method to find out about organisations. There is a wide range of themes covered by narrative research in organisations. For instance, narrative has been studied in terms of:

- organisational communication (Bantz 1993; Boje 1991; Browning 1992; Cooren 1999; Fisher 1984; Myrsiades 1987; Phillips and Brown 1993),
- organisational change (Brown and Humphreys 2003; Feldman and Skøldberg 2002; Feldman 1990; McConkie and Wayne 1986; Skøldberg 1994; Stevenson and Greenberg 1998; Rhodes 2000; Vaara 2002),
- organisational values (Meyer 1995),
- organisational culture (Brown and McMillan 1991; Jordan 1996; Kaye 1995; Kelly 1985),
- organisational learning (Abma 2000; Abma 2003; Boje 1994; Bower and Clark 1969; Gold 1997; Kaye 1995; Levitt and March 1988; Rhodes 1997; Taylor, Fisher, and Dufresne 2002; Tenkasi and Boland 1993),
- how it can be used in service of control (Wilkins 1983) and power (Clegg 1993; Mumby and Stohl 1991; Smith and Keyton 2001),

[1] There are many examples in almost any qualitative methodology handbook, but see for example: Alvesson and Karreman (2000), Czarniawska (1998), Daft (1983), Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998), and Riessman (1993).

- as well as a means for uncovering the power and politics in an organisation (Boje, Luhman, and Baack 1999; Brown 1998; Brown and Jones 1998; Hall 1985; Humphreys and Brown 2002; Mumby 1987; Mumby and Stohl 1991; Ng and De Cock 2002; Smith and Keyton 2001).

There is also a related area of research on the narratives found in the theory about organisations—probably more accurately called research into the rhetoric of organisation theory (Clegg 1993; Czarniawska 1999).

Writers concerned with narrative in organisations from a sensemaking perspective (Brown 1986; Patriotta 2003; Wallemacq and Sims 1998) build on Weick's theory and try to develop the conception of narrative as a sensemaking device further. From the point of view of organisational sensemaking, the study of narrative mostly focusses on organisational *identity* construction (Ashforth 1998; Czarniawska 1997; Ezzy 1998; Somers 1994). One would expect that the sensemaking approach will differ from the other approaches to narrative in organisations in that narrative is no longer assumed to be a transparent medium giving access to another reality—the narrative constructing the reality itself (Bruner 1991).

However, when more closely inspected it turns out that many of these writers rely on a narratological approach for their analysis. At first glance this choice seems obvious, because narratology is the theory and systematic study of narrative. However, narratology was developed as structuralist literary criticism directed at the understanding of narrative texts (and in particular literary/fictional texts). The immediate practical problem is that, although narratives are ubiquitous in organisations, there is normally a lack of a (definitive) narrative text. Whilst organisations are contexts that do produce texts and a great many of them are in narrative form, these texts are content specific outputs and do not necessarily tell us much about the intrinsic activity of organising and thus organisational sensemaking. The narratives that matter for sensemaking and organising are not readily accessible in text form. Of course, narratives can be elicited in organisations, for example through the use of semi-structured interviews that then gener-

ate the narrative text to be analysed. There is however the question as to how representative such elicited narratives are of the intrinsic organisational sensemaking, as opposed to the individual sense made by the respondent. It can also be asked whether those elicited narratives would have sprung into existence had the opportunity (and prompt) for their production not been created by the researcher.

5.1.2 Sensemaking and stories

For Weick, stories are one element providing substance for sensemaking. He notes that stories are not faithful representations of experiences, instead "the experience is filtered. Events in a story are resorted and given an order" (Weick 1995, p. 128). This filtering and ordering make stories sensemaking devices par excellence. Unfortunately, whilst Weick considers stories important, his treatment of stories is very brief (a mere 5 pages) and he fails to develop the idea. The main shortcoming is that he speaks loosely of stories and does not provide a conception of narrativity that resonates with his theory of organisational sensemaking. In the end he sees the role of stories as supporting content for sensemaking activities instead of as a core theoretical element.

Since his treatment is so short, we can afford to follow it closely in this section and demonstrate that he outsourced the theorisation of narrative to a psychologist interested in everyday personal narratives. Weick (1995, p. 107) likens the resources that people draw on to make sense to vocabularies that are the substance of sensemaking. Weick (1995, p. 107) cites Rorty here, but unfortunately without any discussion or elucidation of why Rorty's concept of 'vocabularies' are an attractive way to speak about the substance of sensemaking. Rorty (1989) uses the word "vocabulary" as a shorthand for his position about the relationship between language and world with the observation that any description of the world takes place in a vocabulary, and that it is untenable to claim that one's particular vocabulary corresponds exactly with reality. Weick was probably attracted to Rorty's implication that vocabularies are the products of continual human

construction and therefore in principle contingent. These are essentially the frames we use during sensemaking that are derived from previous rounds of sense made by our peers and our predecessors. Cultures, paradigms, and stories are examples of sets of content that make up these cognitive frames that are relatively stable over time. In sensemaking theory stories figure in particular as "vocabularies of sequence and experience" (Weick 1995, p. 127).

> People pull from several different vocabularies …to focus their sensemaking. They pull words from the vocabularies of society and make sense using ideology. They pull words from the vocabularies of organization and make sense using third-order controlls. They pull words from the vocabularies of predecessors and make sense using tradition. And they pull words from vocabularies of sequence and experience and make sense using narratives. (Weick 1995, p. 107)

Weick starts the section by noting the increased recent research interest in the role of stories in sensemaking, due to a general increase in the role of narrative in science.[2] He refers to his own prior work with Browning (Weick and Browning 1986) on argument and narration in organisational communication where they elaborate on Bruner's distinction between narrative and paradigmatic modes of thought to observe that "people are often handicapped when they try to make sense of organizational life, because

[2]He cites the examples of Mitroff, I. I., and Kilmann, R. H. (1975). "On organization stories: An approach to the design and analysis of organizations through myths and stories", in R. H. Kilmann, L. R. Pondy, and D. P. Slevin (Eds.), *The management of organization design* (Vol. 1, pp.189–207). New York: North-Holland;
Fisher, W. (1984). "Narration as a human communication paradigm: The case of public moral argument", *Communication Monographs*, 51, pp. 1–22;
Polkinghorne, D. E. (1988). *Narrative knowing and the human sciences*. Albany: State University of New York Press;
Bruner, J. (1990). "Culture and human development: A new look", *Human Development*, 33, pp. 344–355; and
Zukier, H. (1986). "The paradigmatic and narrative modes in goal-guided inference", in R. M. Sorrentino and E. T. Higgins (Eds.), *Handbook of motivation and cognition* (pp.465–502). New York: Guilford.

their skills at using narratives for interpretation are not tapped by [organizational] structures designed for argumentation" (Weick 1995, p. 127).

After this interlude Weick relies almost entirely on parts of the work of Robinson, in the form of an article (Robinson 1981) and a book chapter (Robinson and Hawpe 1986), for his narrative theory. Moreover, in places he invokes evidence described by Robinson in preparation for a critique and therefore sometimes comes to different conclusions from those argued by Robinson. Citing Robinson, Weick (1995, p. 127) sees stories about remarkable experiences as ways of making the unexpected expectable. Weick then devotes the next two paragraphs to recounting what Robinson means by "vivid, tellable, interesting stories that are 'noteworthy' …[and] …depart from shared norms of experience and prevailing frames" (Weick 1995, p. 127) in that the described actions are difficult, the situation is novel and cannot be approached routinely, the normal sequence of events are interrupted by the unexpected, and in the eyes of the narrator there is something unusual about the experience (Weick 1995, pp. 127–128). What Weick wants to get at is that stories about remarkable experiences challenge our ready frames for sensemaking and could be considered cues that resist framing and thus are potential junctures for frame updating. When the novelty is too extreme, it might be impossible to update the frame and "vivid stories may represent an ongoing cue in search of a frame" (Weick 1995, p. 128). However, the section that Weick cited from Robinson about the four ways in which tellable stories challenge the status quo, is in fact Robinson's description of the views of *another author* on the 'tellability' aspect of a narrative. Here is the paragraph from Robinson:

> Teun van Dijk[3] agrees that events must be 'remarkable' in order to succeed as personal narratives. He proposes that an incident must meet one or more of the following criteria to be tellable as a story: (1) the actions performed must be difficult; (2) initially the situation must pose a predicament, that is, there

[3]Teun A. Van Dijk, "Action, Action Description, and Narrative", *New Literary History*, 6 (1975), 273-294.

> should not be an obvious or predictable course of action which the narrator could have followed to resolve the situation; (3) in an otherwise normal sequence of events unexpected events occur; (4) some aspect of the situation-the participants, objects, or processes-must be unusual or strange in the narrator's experience. As van Dijk notes, all of these qualities or criteria must be defined by reference to the norms of experience in the narrator's speech community. Put differently, when the narrator and the listener(s) share the same model of reality, then the 'remarkableness' of events is consensually defined. (Robinson 1981, p. 59)

In addition, Robinson was not quoting Van Dijk to agree with him, but in order to set him up as a foil for the contrasting position that Robinson aims to take up, namely that in everyday discourse stories are not limited to remarkable or unusual experiences. Robinson (1981, p. 60) finds that whilst the unusual and unexpected are definitely good material for stories, "it seriously misrepresents the diversity of everyday discourse to assert that such incidents are the only ones people tell stories about". Furthermore, when observing everyday discourse "the point of a story can be implied or even unknown" (Robinson 1981, p. 85). Robinson wants to stress the situated nature of personal narratives, their particular form depends on shared conversational norms, available discursive resources, and the pragmatic context that calls for a story (Robinson 1981, p. 85). Whilst these features make it harder to study everyday stories with the structural tools from narratology and literary theory, it highlights "the versatility of the genre as well as the centrality of 'storying' in everyday life" (Robinson 1981, p. 85). According to Robinson to understand the role of narratives in life we need to look beyond the vivid tales of the unexpected; narrativity does more than normalise surprise. Nonetheless, what Weick draws from Robinson—or more correctly from Robinson's description of Van Dijk—is that the recipe for creating a tellable story is a sensemaking recipe.

He then highlights the role of stories in the retrospective property of

sensemaking by noting that stories provide a history that is the explanation for an outcome (Weick 1995, p. 128). But stories are more than just retrospective accounts of events, "[t]hey gather strands of experience into a plot …[which] follows either the sequence beginning-middle-end or the sequence situation-transformation-situation. But the sequence is the source of sense" (Weick 1995, p. 128). Weick does not elaborate on how plots differ from mere succession and therefore does not grapple with the importance of the causality or logical coherence of the events gathered in the narrative sequence. He does however see sequence as sensible:

> Sequencing is a powerful heuristic for sensemaking. Because the essence of storytelling is sequencing, it is not surprising that stories are powerful stand-alone contents for sensemaking. Stories allow clarity achieved in one small area to be extended to and imposed on an adjacent area that is less orderly. (Weick 1995, p. 129)

With this quote Weick moves from stories as cues challenging frames, to stories as devices to connect events into a linear sequence. Weick (1995, p. 129) then lists further features of stories that make them useful for making sense: 1. Stories integrate knowledge with conjectures, 2. provide causal coherence to events that might otherwise be seen as unrelated, 3. make it possible to connect present things to absent things 4. stories act as "mnemonics that enable people to reconstruct earlier complex events", 5. guide action when routines are absent and enrich the routines when present, 6. are "database[s] of experience from which [people] can infer how things work", 7. "stories transmit and reinforce third-order controls by conveying shared values and meaning", 8. can be diagnostic tools, 9. and they limit the disruption experienced during ongoing projects.

In other words, stories do a lot of sensemaking work. Weick (1995, p. 130) explains the role of stories as diagnostic tools in stories of near-misses, since the story can consider what could-have-happened. Weick (1995, pp. 130–131) also argues that stories immunise hearers to crisis situations, because having heard the story before, the listener would be less

surprised when the crisis does come to pass. In other words, stories can reduce autonomic arousal that affects sensemaking. As cues, stories have a role in keeping our sensemaking frames sharp and specifically "vivid stories are stubborn vocabularies that intrude into sensemaking" (Weick 1995, p. 131). At this point Weick takes stock of everything he claimed for stories in sensemaking and settles for this definition: "Stories are cues within frames that are also capable of creating frames [...] Stories that exemplify frames, and frames that imply stories, are two basic forms in which the substance of sensemaking becomes meaningful" (Weick 1995, p. 131).

Although stories are presented alongside ideologies, third-order-controls, paradigms, theories of action, and tradition as a vocabulary of sensemaking, stories differ from the other vocabularies, because, unlike the other sensemaking resources mentioned by Weick, they provide more than content of previous sense made frozen in frames to be imposed.

In his book (Weick 1995), the consideration of the role of stories only goes so far. However, in the later restatement of his theory into a model for the organisational sensemaking process, Weick gives stories a more substantial role, much closer to what is argued for here. Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2005, p. 414) explains the activity of organising as the ecological change-enactment-selection-retention sequence with that which is retained influencing future rounds of enactment and selection. In this ecological change and enactment form an interacting pair, with external change prompting action and actions in turn causing changes that might feed back as ecological change after many intermediate steps in the environment. An internalised version of enactment is present in what an organisation chooses to notice and bracket from the flow in the environment (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld 2005, p. 414). The moments that demand active sensemaking like breaks and interruptions, equivocality and ambiguity, occur during the process of noticing and bracketing of cues. Then when describing the imposition of frames on these cues, Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2005, p. 414) says: "Here a combination of retrospective attention, mental models, and articulation perform a narrative reduction of the bracketed material and generate a locally plausible story. Though plausible, the story that is se-

lected is also tentative and provisional." It seems that here we move from Goffman's frames to narratives (also because there are competing narratives in play, just like there are multiple frames or multiple selves in play. However, it soon becomes clear that Weick's modification is that narratives are a result of various potential connections between frame and cues and as a result the plausible stories are stored to be used as future frames. "When a plausible story is retained, it tends to become more substantial because it is related to past experience, connected to significant identities, and used as a source of guidance for further action and interpretation" (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld 2005, p. 414). In other words, the revised ecological change-enactment-selection-retention model of sensemaking expanded the sensemaking work of stories from cues in frames to cues that become frames. Weick did not elaborate on how such a plausible story is configured, therefore it is not clear how a plausible configuration happens. Furthermore, since the flow of experience is likened to senseless stimuli from which cues must be extracted, the raw material for story construction is also undertheorised by Weick. Later we'll turn to Ricoeur to demonstrate that his hermeneutics offers theoretical resources for these aspects. At this point we can just sign-post that what Ricoeur refers to as mimesis_2 concerns the means by which a story is configured, what he calls mimesis_1 refers to the resources that prefigures the story. Both of these aspects are missing in Weick's account of stories, however what Ricoeur calls mimesis_3, or refiguration, is echoed in Weick's idea that the plausibility of a story helps to guide future action.

In contrast to Weick, the argument here is that narrative is not just cues or frames. In fact, narrative is more basic than the other vocabularies and should be privileged in the study of organisational sensemaking, because it is the only vocabulary focused on connections—all the others are either frames or cues. Recall that, according to Weick, the minimal sensible structure for sensemaking requires a frame, a cue, and a connection. Narrative offer a device for connecting past, already processed and made sensible, experiences with the puzzling present experience. Later we'll argue that one way in which philosophical hermeneutics can easily contribute to or-

ganisational sensemaking is if narrative, properly conceived, is elevated to a category of its own, next to enactment, instead of putting it alongside other vocabularies that are merely frames of frozen content that causes it to lose its dynamic narrativity aspects. Unfortunately, Weick did not fully appreciate the epistemological and ontological significance of narrativity. He saw the main value of narrative sequential ordering that is offers a way of establishing plausibility for a particular framing, because narrative sequence and the flow of experience have the same form according to him. However, as we'll see in the work of Ricoeur, the relationship between experience and narrative is more complicated than Weick assumes.

One cannot side-step the complex relation between history and fiction or the interpretive act of application. Weick's insistence on the plausibility aspect of stories (the fact that they are convincing precisely because of their narrative presentation) is what opens him to the charge that "any old story won't do". Basbøll (2012) takes aim at Weick's insistence on plausibility as the criterion for a story to assist successful sensemaking. He takes as target for his analysis the story that Weick (1995, pp. 54–55) relates in the section about plausibility as a property of sensemaking. Essentially it is the story of a group of people that got lost and, after some trepidation, found their way with the help of a map. The kicker is that they discovered afterwards that the map was of a different territory, yet it helped them to orient themselves sufficiently. According to Weick this story suggests that to make sense of a situation, plausibility rather than accuracy is sufficient. As one acts on the initial plausible sense, one enacts more and more order into the world which makes it feel more orderly and predictable. Basbøll (2012, p. 2) argues that "we must reject the idea that 'any old map will do' for leaders and that 'any old story will do' for scholars". His main criticism is that Weick presented the story as a historical anecdote, whilst Basbøll (2012, p. 16) uncovered the fact that the true origins of the story is a translated poem that appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement*. As a consequence, Basbøll argues that an important claim for Weick's theory of sensemaking is based on a fiction. He analyses the way in which Weick glibly moves from maps to plans in that having a plan is more important than it being a good

plan—a suggestion that Basbøll finds horrifying. Whilst Basbøll wants to keep a strict distinction between history and fiction, the next section will show that these are problems that philosophical hermeneutics engaged with deeply and developed some answers to.

5.1.3 Hermeneutics and narrativity

From the previous section it is clear that although Weick has an inkling of the role of narrative in the construction of social reality, narrative remains largely under-theorised and as Basbøll showed this under-theorisation matters also for the practice of Weick's own sensemaking analyses.

Narrative has been studied in many different fields and theorisation is furthest developed in the field of narratology with its roots in French structuralism[4] and Russian formalism.[5] According to Culler (2002, p. 189), narratological approaches are united in the distinction between the story (the events told) and the discourse (the manner of presentation of those events). The narratologists are primarily interested in how the narrative elements are used to tell the story. Similarly in literary theory a distinction is often made between the "narrative text" (the rendering of the narrative in text form) and the "narrative discourse" (that which is partly rendered in the text). Bruner (1991, p. 5), a psychologist, makes a similar distinction between narrative as a mode of thought and narrative as a discourse. Bruner takes this to be the distinction between the mental process and the discursive form that expresses that process.

Hermeneutics is interested in narratives too, primarily because of its history as text interpretation and, in its philosophical hermeneutic guise, its continued reliance on the model of text interpretation. Since many texts are narratives, hermeneutic interest had to extend to narrative as its most frequently encountered material. However, if we draw a distinction between narrative(s) and narrativity as the properties of narrative, in particular those that make the interpretation of reality and time possible, then

[4]For example Todorov and Weinstein (1969).

[5]The work of Propp (1927) is emblematic of this approach.

we get at the reasons why narrativity matters to hermeneutic reflection on the epistemological and ontological planes too—since narratives, whether historical or fictional, are cases where many of the claims and commitments of philosophical hermeneutics are tested. Ricoeur is a case in point. We have seen previously that for Ricoeur narrative (and specifically its synthetic capacity for emplotment) is the way for us to grasp the flow of experience: "time becomes human time to the extent that it is organized after the manner of a narrative; narrative, in turn, is meaningful to the extent that it portrays the features of temporal experience" (Ricoeur 1984b, p. 3). Basically to Ricoeur, as we live our lives over time, we emplot actions by representing them in narratives that relate them to other events—in other words narrative is the device we use to think time. Ricoeur (1984b, p. 3) claims that the hermeneutic "circle of narrativity and temporality is not a vicious but a healthy circle", by explaining its operation as a circle of mimesis (Ricoeur 1984b, pp. 71–76) that goes through three steps, where "[w]e are following […] the destiny of a prefigured time that becomes a refigured time through the mediation of a configured time" (Ricoeur 1984b, p. 54).

The actions that make up the flow of experience are already participating in a mimesis, which Ricoeur (1984b, p. 54) calls mimesis_1, because for our plots to imitate action, the ability to recognise action as action (and notions of goals, means, motivation, etc.) is a precondition. Ricoeur (1984b, p. 55) sees this relationship between the practical understanding of actions and the narrative understanding that connects and orders them as one of presupposition and transformation. Narrative composition depends on the practical understandings of the nature of actions as well as on the symbolic resources (signs, rules, and norms) that mediates any identifiable human action (Ricoeur 1984b, p. 57). Without a sense of symbols, rules, or norms the actions grasped and represented narratively cannot be evaluated or appreciated (Ricoeur 1984b, p. 58). Lastly, narrative configuration would be impossible without some understanding of the temporality of actions (Ricoeur 1984b, pp. 59–64).[6] Mimēsis_1 is therefore the prefiguration that is

[6]In this section, Ricoeur (1984b, pp. 60–63) takes the reader on a detour of Heidegger's distinctions between *Zeitlichkeit*, *Geschichtlichkeit*, and *Wiederholung* to describe

assumed in any configuration achieved by emplotment.

Mimesis$_2$, or configuration, is the conversion of actions into a plot, in other words the construction of a particular story. Ricoeur starts with Aristotelian *muthos* as the "organisation of events" (Ricoeur 1984b, p. 64). Ricoeur however wants to go beyond Aristotle and he highlights the role of emplotment as more than just the organisation of events by sequentially ordering them; in other words he is also interested in the mediating role of plot. Firstly, between individual actions or events and the whole—the plot is what integrates the recounting of individual incidents into a whole. Or the way Ricoeur (1984b, p. 65) states it: "A story [...] must be more than just an enumeration of events in serial order [...] emplotment is the operation that draws a configuration out of a simple succession." Secondly, emplotment mediates between the raw material available and the eventual story by its configurating ability—producing a "concordant discordance" (Ricoeur 1984b, p. 66) in the form of a "meaningful story from a diversity of events or incidents" (Ricoeur 1984b, p. 65). Thirdly, emplotment achieves a temporal mediation by "grasping together" (Ricoeur 1984b, p. 66) discrete events and integrating them in a whole, thus extracting "a configuration from a succession" of events (Ricoeur 1984b, p. 66).

Ricoeur (1984b, p. 70) regards the refiguration stage, called mimesis$_3$, as similar to Gadamer's 'application'. This is the stage in mimesis where the world of the narrative and the world of the listeners meet and the listeners see their situation differently as a result of their engagement with the narrative. In mimesis$_3$ narrative impacts reality, Ricoeur (1984b, p. 70) says that the full meaning of narrative only becomes clear when "it is restored to the time of action and of suffering in mimesis$_3$" to complete the circle of mimesis. It is the act of reading that provides mimesis$_3$, because through reading the narrative is completed and is brought back to the world

---

the way narratives lead to the point of the story, which itself is understandable from the story's beginning to its end and then from its end back to its beginning again. The challenge of representing the "within-time-ness" of *Weltzeit* linearly in narratives "as a simple succession of nows" (Ricoeur 1984b, p. 63) reveals that whilst the various events and episodes can be lined up in a linear fashion, narrative configuration makes it possible to "read time backwards" (Ricoeur 1984b, p. 66).

in which it is to be understood and where it leads to action.

Kearney (2006, p. 484) explains the subtleties of Ricoeur's argument very well. The circle of mimesis works in a way that all three forms of mimesis are simultaneously in play. It is not as if mimesis is initiated with a standing start from mimesis_1 and then follows a linear path via mimesis_2 inevitably through to mimesis_3. Instead, any mimesis_1 (prefiguration) is already the product of a prior mimesis_3 (refiguration), which in turn was mediated by a prior mimesis_2 (configuration)—hence a circle (or more properly, a spiral) of mimesis.

> [I]f it is true that Ricoeur seems to be at one moment supporting the links between narrative and life and at others the differences, it is because that is actually what he is doing—and intentionally so. For what Ricoeur seeks here (and it is a typical strategy in most of his works) is a dialectic of opposition which he will then try to mediate. Hence Ricoeur's division of narrative into three kinds—prefigurative, configurative and refigurative. So doing, Ricoeur is determined to challenge the monolithic and univocal view of narrative which compels one to make an either/or choice between narrative and life, as if they were opposed alternatives. (Kearney 2006, p. 481)

Kearney (2006, p. 481) concludes that Ricoeur is arguing for a "mutual interweaving" of continuity and discontinuity, or narrative (which organises our meaningful experience of life) and life (which when experienced does not display narrative coherence).

5.1.3.1 Narrative and time

Minimally what is needed for something to be a narrative is that it must establish a causal and sequential link between events. We've seen that Weick was primarily interested in stories as a "vocabulary of sequence and experience", and in sensemaking theory narrative is primarily a connecting device between the frame of past experience and the cues of the present experience.

In this view what narratives do is to relate the various actors, incidents, and events gathered together in the narrative whole by establishing causal links between the depicted narrative episodes. Ricoeur (1984b, p. 69) explains that the paradigms of emplotment as not only the form or model identified by tradition as a stable genre, but that in "the ordering of events the causal connection (one thing as the cause of another) prevails over pure succession (one thing after another), a universal emerges that is [...] the ordering itself erected as a type". The famous example of this difference is a staple of English literature classes with Forster (1962, p.87) explaining the mere succession of events as: "The king died and then the queen died", whilst a plot would be: "The king died, and then the queen died of grief". It has been pointed out by Gallie (2001, p. 43) that it is not so much the causality that makes a narrative, but rather "logical continuity"—which can be achieved by one thing being the cause of another, but logical continuity can also be achieved in other ways that does not meet the strict sense of cause, yet preserve continuity by earlier events occasioning later ones. Gallie's logical continuity criterion for narratives widens the definition from causal sufficiency to necessity.

We saw that for Ricoeur (1984b, pp. 64–71), narrative is the way we make time meaningful. The actions and lived experiences take place over time and Ricoeur's mimesis_1 captures the fact that these prefigure a potential plot in its most primitive form. Mimesis_2 configures these actions and experiences by means of selection and narrative ordering into a meaningful continuity. Whenever this ordered narrative is related it makes the refiguration of the context of the retelling possible in mimesis_3. In this three-fold mimesis the narrative makes events both static, so they can be invoked in a particular situation, and dynamic in that they are then reshaped by it. Whilst one can take it apart analytically, in practice all three forms of mimesis are always in play.

5.1.3.2 The epistemology of narrative

Hermeneutic philosophers and historians considered questions regarding the epistemology and ontology of narrative far more seriously than structural literary theorists or narratologists did. This is so because the narratives historians engage with matter for the kind of claims that historians try to make. For literary theorists interested in fiction the epistemology of narrative is not a pressing matter. What kind of knowledge is captured in and made accessible through narratives? The implication is that a narrative offers insight beyond the actions and events that are presented over its course. From the preceding section about plot, it may seem that narratives primarily explain the reasons for actions or events.

Ricoeur (1984b, pp. 148–149) considers the position of Danto (1985, p. 233) who simply holds that "what people typically want and expect, when the need for explanation is felt, is simply a true story". With this simple formulation he puts forward a view of narratives as explanations for change. However, when we move to fictional narratives this view of narrative as explanation does not hold for how we follow stories in general, because we only require explanations when we cannot follow the story any longer (Gallie 2001, p. 41).Ricoeur engaged extensively with the difference between history and fiction in an attempt to get at the nature of narrative insight. He believes that both history and fiction require the ability to follow a story (Ricoeur 1984b, pp. 91, 175).

On the one hand historical narratives are trying to reach a true reconstruction of the past. The past events prefigure the plot, but even the most meticulous historian engages in emplotment, because the plot does not lie explicit in the past. Certain events must be selected, whilst others are ignored, and tied to actors and motivations in a narrative configuration. On the other hand, literary narratives do not have the same limitations as historical ones, but this does not mean that they are unrelated to reality—they still seek to reveal some aspect of reality. Ricoeur notes that, even though fictional narratives are in principle free from the constraints of history, they are typically related in past tense. In this, he reads a link between mimesis$_2$

and mimesis$_1$, or between the events described in the narrative and the real world (Ricoeur 1985, p. 62). Ricoeur (1984b, p. 59) likens fictional narratives to a laboratory where we can try out life experiments to give us ultimately a wider and deeper lived experience without having to actually live through it, so to speak.

There remains a gap between history and fiction (Ricoeur 1984b, p. 179) that is the result of the fact that historians must select their raw material for fashioning the narrative from what is available in historical events, whilst literary authors can invent their raw material as they go along. For this reason, Ricoeur refers to the narrative elements in history as 'quasi-characters' playing out 'quasi-plots' where the actors of history behave 'as-if' they were characters in a story in a mirror image of how characters in a story behave 'as if' they were real actors in history: "quasi-plot and quasi-characters belong to the same intermediary level and have a similar function, serving as a relay station for the movement of history's questioning back toward narrative and, beyond the narrative, in the direction of actual practice" (Ricoeur 1984b, p. 182). The point Ricoeur wants to make is that, although there are important differences between history and fiction, there is also a lot in common between the two, to such an extent that history and fiction becomes "interweaved" in the experience of life (Ricoeur 1988, p. 245) through the "interpenetration of history and fiction, stemming from the criss-crossing processes of a fictionalization of history and a historization of fiction" (Ricoeur 1988, p. 246).

5.1.3.3 The ontology of narrative

There is very little consideration of the ontology of narrative among thinkers that embraced it. Clark (1990, p. 156) notes that narrativists "say very little about what stories are; reasonably enough, given that on its own terms there is no meta-perspective for analysing them". The most pressing ontological issue is not definitional, but about the relation between narratives and reality. Specifically, the question about whether narratives are a mode of faithful representation of reality, or perhaps ideological devices that dis-

tort that reality in favor of a dominating perspective, or whether they are indistinguishable from the 'reality', because there is no meaningful reality beyond them or even that narratives are not even about reality.

Since they deal with historical narratives, historians as a rule assume that historical narratives refer to actual events outside the narrative. Hermeneutic philosophers like Ricoeur find themselves closer to the historians than the structural narrativists. Clark (1990, p. 157) shows that Ricoeur's retention of Gadamer's notion of application in mimesis_3 means that narratives do not simply or only confirm dominant ideology, but through refiguration opens up potential modes of action. Mimesis_3 brings the narrative back to reality. One way of putting it is that narratives *refer* to some aspect of reality. It is conceivable that a narrative does not represent actual events, yet it can still disclose something about the world by giving it an order and coherence. The question is of course whether the narrative ordering is something forced onto reality that leads to distortion, whether it is something reflecting the truth, or whether is something in-between that distorts and reveals simultaneously?

Ricoeur's position is the third one: whilst the three-fold process of mimesis organises experience through configuration, it gives form to things that were prefigured already, however in this process of giving it form, it transforms them to such an extent that they require refiguration. Mimēsis_1 refers to the 'pre-narrative structure' of events and actions in the world, that which makes them susceptible to narration. What narratives do through the work of mimesis_2 is to reveal something that already inheres in the world. It is however hard to pinpoint what is being revealed. Ricoeur insists that what is revealed is a human truth rather than a referential truth.

At this point it is possible to link the mimetic function of narrative as conceived by Ricoeur back to Weick's consideration of stories as cues or frames. It is clear that Ricoeur considers the possibility of narratives to open up a "proposed world" and the effect that this fictional world might have on the world of experience through potential re-descriptions of reality. The point that is relevant to the notion of enactment in sensemaking theory is that the redescription of reality reached by way of the three forms of

mimesis has implications for action, since one now acts in terms of a world seen differently than before.

5.2 Organisational identity

The history of management thinking on identity is well-known, but as background it is recounted here in broad strokes. In Weber's original institutionalist vision, organisations will resemble each other more and more as they conform to rational-legal configurations the superior efficiency of which supplants the organisational diversity of pre-modernity (Kalberg 1980; Orihara 2008; Weber 1968). Similarly, in Taylor's scientific management perspective, organisational identity is disregarded, because the organisational machinery should be running on rational principles concerned with maximum efficiency. In fact, the social identities of the workers are considered problems that leads to inefficient and unfair work arrangements (Taylor 2007, p. 43). These traditional work arrangements have to be corrected by scientific organisation and the impact of the individual worker identities has to be mitigated through proper training to render them rational economic agents that can then be rewarded with the higher pay made possible by increased efficiency. Resistance to Taylor's ideas were so hefty that he had to explain himself in front of a United States Senate Committee (Wagner-Tsukamoto 2007, p. 112). The famous adverse results of the Hawthorne Studies (Roethlisberg and Dickson 1939),[7] put subjective human needs squarely on the management agenda and signalled the starting point of the human relations movement that was the precursor to contemporary human resource management. This line of thinking culminated in Maslow's hierarchy of needs which privileges self-actualisation (and other identity-related human needs) by putting it at the apex of human needs

[7]The effect that the authors of the Hawthorne Studies claimed to have identified was not supported by the evidence. As Carey (1967, p. 4031) puts it: 'It still remains an open question how it was possible for conclusions so little supported by evidence to gain such an influential and respected place within scientific disciplines and to hold this place for so long'. It seems the focus on human needs and motivational aspects of work was an idea whose time has come at the time of the Hawthorne Studies.

(Maslow 1943). However, this inadvertent discovery that the motivation of workers is linked to their human needs—in the case of the Hawthorne experiment the need to belong (group identification)—inspired management effort to fostering organisational identities to supplant (or at least mitigate) the traditional group identities that workers arrive at work with (such as the 'work gang' mentality that Taylor wanted to supplant with scientific management methods). In other words, the notion of 'organisational identity' was born from attempts to extend management control over the drivers of human motivation.

Management efforts to shape an organisational identity became normalised to the extent that certain manifestations of it are nowadays expected in public company reports by regulators and shareholders. Salient organisational identity related expressions are the mission and vision statements that are assumed requirements for nearly all modern organisations beyond a certain size. Mission and vision are often used interchangeably, but usually the mission statement describes the organisation's purpose and its general approach to deliver on that purpose, whilst the vision statement outlines the future goals of the organisation—the envisaged future position the company will attain if the mission is successfully completed. Together these statements capture the nature of the organisation and hints at its self-conception and the values it stands for. These are not mere public relations statements, they are invoked during strategic decisions, play a role in defining performance standards, and provide a general framework for employee behaviour. Whilst there is often a disconnect between the published vision and mission statements and the actual organisational practices, this lack of understanding of, and resultant disputes about, "who we are" underscores how widely accepted the notion of an organisational identity is. Whilst much of the day-to-day running of organisations can be achieved without reference to identity-related questions, many organisational design decisions and any strategic, organisational development, or organisational change decisions revolve around identity concerns and how an organisation differentiates itself from its environment.

5.2.1 Organisational identity as a research problem

Whilst management interest in organisational identity proceeded from motivational concerns, research interest in the problem of collective identity lagged behind management practice. Early interest was focused on fostering strong work-based identification with the organisation among employees as the basis for business success (Peters and Waterman 1982). The broad claim is summed up by Deal and Kennedy (1982, p. 15) that firms can count on up to two hours of extra productive work from employees that identify strongly with the organisation. These studies are uncritically in service of management requirement for establishing a 'corporate culture' which in practice is short-hand for achieving normative control over employee behaviour. Kunda (1992, p. 10) describes how strong corporate cultures serve to increase employee commitment to the point of their internalisation of the organisation's goals and values, thus creating ideal employees that manage themselves and no longer need direct supervision. Talking specifically of the culture of engineering companies, Kunda (1992, p. 218) notes that "[t]ech management [...] invests considerable energy in attempting to embed the rules, prescriptions and admonitions of the culture in the fabric of everyday life in the company".

One of the reasons why research interest in organisational identity developed slowly is that it is one of those difficult and slippery concepts that, depending on what one assumes about it, shows your hand on a whole range of fundamental questions. Organisational identity needs to be distinguished from the individual identities of organisational members (or member's identification with the organisation). How is the identity of the organisation different from the cultural and professional identities that abound in large organisations? It is therefore no wonder that there exists great diversity in the uses of this concept with various ideas about how to study it properly.

A foundational study by Albert and Whetten (1985) probably established organisational identity as an independent research field. The Albert and Whetten (1985) notion of organisational identity consists of three parts consisting of members' beliefs, organisational features, and discourse ele-

ments. Their working definition of organisational identity is the members' shared beliefs regarding "who we [they] are". The second part consist of the so-called 'CED features' of an organisation, namely the things considered to be the central, enduring, and distinctive characteristics of the organisation. Together these features are frequently invoked during identity-related discourse in and around the organisation. Far from settling the issue, the work of Albert and Whetten opened up questions about the properties of organisational identity as a phenomenon. The multi-part definition enabled those following Albert and Whetten to choose their own emphases, which helped the growth of the field, but also means that the field is since marked by inconsistent use of concepts and a wide range of foci.

For some, placing emphasis on the first part of the Albert and Whetten definition, organisational identity is the beliefs by members about the organisation and as such a subjective interpretation by observers. For others, placing emphasis on the second part of the definition, organisational identity is an objective property of the organisation, something that differentiates itself from other organisations. Furthermore, for those emphasising the discursive aspects in Albert and Whetten, organisational identity is discourse and thus neither interpretations nor properties, but a complex interaction between many aspects that do not necessarily always cohere.

Realists and constructionists would approach the question as to whether organisational identity refers to a property of an organisation or to a set of beliefs about the organisation in very different ways and come to different conclusions. The dominant approach to the understanding of organisational identity is constructionist. Gioia and Thomas (1996) is a good example of a sensemaking approach to organisational identity and they argue that it is best seen as a set of representations articulating collective beliefs about the organisation. In constrast, Elstak (2008) bemoan the lack of quantitative studies about organisational identity and points to the predominance of social constructionist research approaches in the field as the underlying problem. In opposition to the constructionist conceptions of identity, Elstak and Van Riel (2004) argue that organisational identity is best understood as a property of the organisation. Between these two poles, there are a range

of possible positions between identity as static and coherent and identity as fragmentary and fluid. For some, organisational identity is a property of the organisation that is empirically observable. Albert and Whetten's original formulation of identity as that which is central, enduring and distinctive in the answer to the question of "who are we?" is a good example (Whetten 2006). For others, organisational identity is a set of frameworks or interpretations socially constructed by organisational members to make sense of their organisation (Weick 1995; Dutton and Dukerich 1991). Yet another group views organisational identity as discursive constructs with competing hegemonic claims (Brown 2006; Czarniawska 1998).

It is clear that these three groupings have disparate views of the nature of social reality and therefore of the nature of organisation as well. But to some degree all three approaches have to resolve a tension between identity (seen as distinctiveness, similarity and continuity) and the plurality, heterogeneity, and change that form part of organisational life. The idea that organisational identity revolves around that which is enduring, compared to the collective memory of members, and distinctive, compared to other organisations in the environment, would be a realist position. In contrast a constructionist perspective would argue that organisational identity is constantly being constructed through processes of sensemaking, so that it is continuous in a sense, even though not strictly speaking enduring. For people at the discursive end of the spectrum, organisational identity simply cannot be a singular coherent identity, it is necessarily provisional, contextual, contested and therefore fragmentary.

5.2.2 Organisational identity as a research field

We can now consider the typical research issues in the field in the wake of the opening made by Albert and Whetten (1985). The fact that over two decades after that seminal article, Albert and Whetten (2004), asked anew what organisational identity is, shows that many of the ontological issues surrounding identity was not engaged with very deeply in the field of organisation studies. Soon after, Whetten (2006) revisited their foundational

article and respecified and sharpened their organizational identity concept in response to criticism that it was too vague and encompassing. This time they also consider how identity relates to larger institutions.

Dutton and Dukerich (1991) considered the conditions under which identities adapt and the role of micro-processes in that adaption in their study about the interaction between organisational image and organisational identity as employees of the Port Authority had to deal with homeless people at their facilities. Weick used this article as an example in multiple places (Weick 1995, pp. 20–21, 69, 173, 187) and lists it as an exemplary study that can be considered paradigmatic in sensemaking research (Weick 1995, p. 173). Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail (1994) connected images of organisation with the strength of member identification in a model. In addition to Albert and Whetten's image of the CED-features of the organisation, they also considered what the image is that organisational members imagined outsiders held of their organisation. Member assessment of the images of their organisation is influenced by their individual identity and self-esteem. The link between organisational identity and image is also the target of theorisation by Gioia and Thomas (1996) and Hatch and Schultz (1997). In the latter article Hatch and Schultz (1997) argue that increasingly the actions and statements of top management affect both organisational identity and image in a development that blurs internal and external boundaries. They link this with Weick's sensemaking ideas by arguing that "culture, identity and image form three related parts of a system of meaning and sense-making that defines an organization to its various constituencies" (Hatch and Schultz 1997, p. 357).

Fiol (2002) discusses the effects of a stable organisational identity that not only binds people together during a change initiative, but is also counterproductive in that it blinds members to new possibilities. Corley and Gioia (2004) report on identity discrepancies and ambiguity as a result of organisational changes as the result of a corporate spin-off of a top-performing unit into an independent organisation. They studied the change in terms and meanings as the organisational identity evolved and as a result argue for a dynamic conception of organisational identity. The issue is that or-

ganisational identity must on the one hand provide stability in the face of change or ambiguous and strategic choices, whilst on the other hand it must be open to be reconstructed and updated.

One way to deal with this tension is to argue that very few organisations have a single coherent identity. This is so, because most organisations have more than one type of purpose and therefore organisations are differentiated not only in terms of form, but also display a hybrid identities (Foreman and Whetten 2002) fitting the various types of purposes and potentially leading to conflict and contestation (Golden-Biddle and Rao 1997) which in turn must be managed (Pratt and Foreman 2000). Another way to address this tension is to argue that an entity can draw upon many selves depending on the context (Weick 1995, p. 24). A third, more radical approach, is to give up on the stability aspect of identity as a metaphysical fiction in favour of a collective identity constituted by fragmented, heterogeneous, and polyphonic narratives (Brown 2006).

5.3 Theories of organisational identity

5.3.1 Outright rejection

We should start with the position that rejects the usefulness of organisational identity as a theoretical construct. The question is whether collective entities like organisations have identities the way persons have it, or whether the use of the concept is metaphorical, or whether organisations are quasi-persons, or possess a sort of aggregate identity made up of all its members. Clearly these are not questions that are easily dismissed.

The weak rejection of the notion of organisational identity holds that identity is always personal (individual) identity and that organisations do not exist the way persons exists. For instance, organisations are purposeful in the sense that their parts (the members of the organisation) have purposes (Ackoff 1973, p. 155), but organisations do not have purposes of their own beyond the overlapping purposes of their members. Similarly, organisations do not make decisions or take positions the way persons do, at best

an organisational decision is the outcome of a complex political process of compromise between the various subunits (Pfeffer and Salancik 1974) of the organisation headed by the most influential organisational members. Because of these reasons, organisations are not considered to be 'identifiable' and cannot themselves 'identify' in the same manner as we normally think of persons. The difficulty with the weak rejection is of course that many of their objections regarding organisational identities also hold for the notion of individual identity.

Czarniawska (2004) is an example of the weak rejection on the basis that organisational identity is a continual social construction. In other words, organisational identity is not the same as the naïve Enlightenment ideas about unchanging personal identity,[8] rather it is a complex process of sensemaking and myth-making. Such weak rejection hinge upon what is meant by identity and typically apply only to conceptions of identity as properties rather than beliefs.

The strong rejection is incredulous of the notion of identity itself—whether collective or personal. This position derive from the realisation that most of the objections levelled against the notion of collective identities such as organisations or nations, apply to a degree to personal identity too. Individuals are not as fully integrated as we generally assume, in particular when we consider their psychological or inner mental lives. The strong rejection turns the attention away from organisational identity per se and demands that the notion of identity be engaged at a more abstract level. The foremost exponent of the strong rejection is Parfit (1986) who argues in *Reasons and Persons* that (personal) identity is an empty category with little explanatory function or value. Ricoeur (1992, pp. 129–130) finds in Parfit's position "a formidable adversary" and devotes the fifth study of *Oneself as Another* to Parfit's objections. Ricoeur (1991b, p. 76)

[8] Although the word 'identity' was not used to refer to personal identity during the Enlightenment, the notion of an individual self that can act in the world and change the course of one's own destiny, is very much an Englightenment invention. However, only after the modern distinction was made between personality, as psychological construct about traits, and identity, as sociological construct about how one views your self, can Czarniawska's point be understood.

sees the strength in Parfit's argument that it refutes any impersonal identity concept based on psychological or physical criteria. However, Ricoeur disagrees with Parfit that the only alternative to that position is that of "a Cartesian Pure Ego" which sees identity to be a "further fact" separate from our bodies or mental states. In typical fashion, Ricoeur homes in on this distinction of Parfit's and argues that his notion of narrative identity is not equivalent to the alternative of a Cartesian ego, in addition, "the self …does not simply belong to the category of events and facts" (Ricoeur 1991b, p. 76). Ricoeur contends that Parfitt's objections hold only if one considers identity solely as a label for consistency and maintains that although in one sense identity is about consistency, at the same time it is not static. He offers his concept of narrative identity, which incorporates both the notion of identity-as-sameness and of identity-as-permanence, as a way to escape Parfitt's concerns.

Notwithstanding these objections, it is common cause that organisations spend an awful lot of time and money on identity related activities. In addition organisational members regularly make decisions based on their shared interpretations of who they are as an organisation, what the strategic purpose of the organisation is, and engage in attempts to influence others on the basis of these interpretations. Furthermore, many organisational activities related to coordination or mutual adjustment between members rely on notions of organisational identity.

5.3.2 Social identity theory

Social identity theory is a social psychological theory that sees identity as a function of psychological identification. It roughly holds that people identify with those they deem as similar to themselves and thus seek out groups where they believe they fit well (Tajfel and Turner 1979; Tajfel 1982). The process consists of two processes that mutually drive each other. On the one hand a person that identifies with an 'in-group' and the positive feedback of a feeling of belonging and attachment is amplified by a parallel process of 'dis-identification' regarding an 'out-group' from which the person feels

increasingly alienated. These identification and dis-identification processes depend on a social categorisation ability (Tajfel and Turner 1979, p. 38). After successful categorisation and identification or de-identification, the positive social identity is maintained by social comparison "to maintain or achieve superiority over an out-group" (Tajfel and Turner 1979, p. 41). Social identity theory assumes that belonging to a group is an important psychological need and that it plays an important role in how people make sense of themselves. Also when it comes to inter-group behaviour it is claimed that people will act as group-members (Tajfel and Turner 1979, p. 35), rather than as individuals in a kind of sheep mentality. The cognitive effect that makes this possible has to do with the extent to which people overestimate the similarities with the in-group as well as the differences from the out-group. Social identity theory has a long research tradition in social psychology. As can be seen, it primarily engages identity as a psychological or cognitive phenomenon that runs deep in our psychological or biological makeup, rather than a social or discursive process. This differs from the constructionist position of organisational sensemaking, even though John Turner (a founding thinker of social identity theory) does feature in Weick's description of identity construction via an adaptation by Ring and Van de Ven that is quoted at length by Weick (1995, pp. 22–23).

5.3.3 Psychoanalytic

Psychoanalysis provides fertile theory for the investigation of identification as a process of construction, as opposed to the notion of a stable identity. Psychoanalysis assumes that people strive to maintain a positive and consistent self-identity. This view is also the departure point of cognitive dissonance theory which is a central component of Weick's sensemaking theory. It is reasonable to assume that traces of psychoanalysis influenced Weick, since he is trained as a social psychologist. Psychoanalysts study the subconscious and repressed desires and the emotional responses that drives us to identify strongly with particular things from our past. Whilst psychoanalysis might seem an unlikely resource for collective phenomena,

there are many examples of psychoanalytic studies in the organisation and management fields.

For example, Roberts (2005) uses Lacan in an analysis of management identity in disciplinary procedures. Roberts points to "the desire for control over others; the image of self as the source of autonomous control is also arguably a foundational fantasy for management" (Roberts 2005, p. 630). Another instance in the same journal is the analysis by Jones and Spicer (2005) about the idea of an entrepreneur being a 'sublime object' that becomes the focus of people's aspirations. Even though, or perhaps because, entrepreneurship is a vague notion, it offers a target for projection that helps people to achieve a positive identification. Islam (2014) reinterprets current socio-cognitive approaches to leadership by showing how ideas from psychoanalysis about self-identity are complementary to these approaches and suggesting ways in which it can enrich those. Other examples include Schwartz (1990) and Brown (1997) who both used ideas from psychoanalysis to explore the narcissistic processes by which group identities are defended and legitimacy established in organisations.

5.3.4 Foucauldian

Various overviews (Raffnsøe, Mennicken, and Miller 2017; Rowlinson and Carter 2002; Knights 2002) of Foucauldian approaches to the study of organisations describe the remarkable range of interests and research methods inspired by Michel Foucault, whilst at the same time they bemoan the fact that "much organization theory simply uses Foucault as a convenient resource" (Knights 2002, p. 575). Raffnsøe, Mennicken, and Miller (2017) describes the big influence that Foucault had in the field of organisation studies in four waves, where the first looked at power in organisations from the perspective of Foucauldian concerns with discipline and surveillance; the second wave drew on Foucauldian ideas about language and discourse; the third wave was interested in his ideas about 'governmentality' in studies about various administrative technologies in public sector organisations and how citizens became subjugated by these; and the last wave they iden-

tified draws more on his ideas around techniques of the self and through a "critical engagement with earlier Foucauldian organizational scholarship [...seeks] to develop a more positive conception of subjectivity" (Raffnsøe, Mennicken, and Miller 2017, p. 1).

A good fourth wave example would be Lecoure and Mills (2008) and their use of the Foucauldian notion of technologies of the self to understand organisational evolution. They argue that Hermans's[9] self confrontation method could be employed as "a useful technology of the self" (Lecoure and Mills 2008, p. 16). A typical identity-related study would be that by Villadsen (2007) that applies Foucauldian ideas to modern management technologies that are brought to bear as means of subjugating employees, by managing "the employee's soul" (hence self-understandings). Further examples are a study entitled *Refusing to be 'me'* (Brewis 2004) about resistance to subjugation in a work context, while Knights and Willmott (1989) provide an analysis of how power and subjectivity is treated in labour process theory.

The Foucauldian approach might seem far removed from organisational sensemaking and hermeneutics that are the foci here, but the emphasis on discourse and how dominant discourses influence how people make sense of themselves and their context share common concerns.

5.3.5 Interactionist

We've seen that the previous theoretical perspectives that are commonly employed in the study of organisational identity are from paradigms far removed from the view sensemaking has on social reality. Now we turn to interactionist approaches that are historically rooted in the interpretivist social sciences that also influenced sensemaking theory. These come broadly in two flavours, symbolic and micro interactionist, both of which are compatible with Weick's position, because they share founding thinkers with sensemaking theory.

[9]They refer to H. J. M. Hermans and his notion of a dialogical self, see for instance: Hermans, H. J. M. (1991). "The person as co-investigator in self-research: Valuation theory", *European Journal of Personality* 5, pp. 217-234.

5.3.5.1 Symbolic interactionist

Symbolic interactionists share many features with organisational sensemaking theory, because Mead (1934a) and Goffman (1974), whose ideas helped shape Weick's, are regarded as the founding thinkers of this school of thought. In fact, Weick's description of identity construction is fully interactionist, because identity construction happens through social interaction with others. As we've seen, Weick follows Mead in viewing this construction process as the interplay between how one thinks you're being viewed by others (Mead's "me") and what we do to influence the views of others in response to our guesses about how they view us (Mead's "I"). Goffman (1949) elaborates on Mead's notion of a "parliament of selves" depicting our efforts at identity management as picking out roles (the way dramatic actors would) to suit each social situation, thus carefully presenting ourselves to others in an attempt to influence their judgments. From this perspective identity is strictly speaking not substantive in itself, it is primarily a mode of presentation of the self to the other. Furthermore, it is presentation of the self to oneself, because in this paradigm, one learns about oneself only through the responses of others to one's presentation of a projected identity.

In his description of identity construction, Weick (1995, pp. 20–21) cites a study about organisational identity that is typical of a symbolic interactionist approach: The Dutton and Dukerich (1991) in-depth case study of how the Port Authority's identity was constructed in context.[10] Gardner and Avolio (1998) modelled the social interactionist processes used by leaders during impression management in the service of constructing and maintaining their identities as charismatic leaders. They show how processes like framing, scripting, and performing help the efforts of those in leadership positions to manage the impressions of followers regarding their vision for the organisation. In a study on organisational identification, Jones and Volpe (2011) try to augment the social identity perspective with symbolic interactionism by considering the impact of social networks on

[10]Incidentally, Weick (1995, p. 173) considers this study to be a paradigmatic example of good sensemaking research.

organisational identities.

5.3.5.2 Micro interactionist

Closely related to symbolic interactionism is the micro-interactionist perspective which was inspired by Garfinkel's ethnomethodology (Garfinkel 1967). Typically researchers using this approach is interested in how people use their identities to accomplish actions in a particular social context. As a result these researchers rely on rich data (like video or audio transcriptions) of conversations and interactions in micro-level segments. For example Llewellyn and Burrow (2007) used conversation analysis to read identities of consumption off the interactions of participants, whilst Mcinnes and Corlett (2012) studied 'identity work' and 'identity positioning' in everyday conversations at work.

5.3.6 Narrative Identity and Narrative Inquiry

The last theoretical position for organisational identity researchers is that of narrative identity and narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry in organisations in general is a qualitative research approach to research interviews and their analysis. Narrative identity in particular can be studied through narrative inquiry, but narrative identity refers to the broad assumption that identities are somehow related to the stories people tell. Of course narrative identity as a theoretical concept worked out by Ricoeur shares this assumption, but we should note that there is considerable theoretical diversity emanating from this shared assumption. For instance, in the vast field of psychology the work of McAdams (1985), McAdams (1993), McAdams (2001), and McAdams and McLean (2013) is considered canonical for the notion of narrative identity. For McAdams, narrative identity refers to the autobiographical life story of a person and as a psychologist he is interested in its role in psychological adaptation and development. People construct these internalised life stories to imbue their lives with unity and purpose (McAdams 2001, p. 100). A good example of transposing life-story research from psychology to the domain of organisation studies, is the study by Mar-

tin and Wajcman (2004) who studied organisational identity by analysing the career-narratives of 136 managers. In terms of assumptions and research methods it is entirely psychological life-story research applied to a thematic part of a life-story. Ricoeur would agree with much of what McAdams says about life-stories, but his project is different and narrative identity has to do with much more than internalised life stories. In addition as will become clear later, narrative is not just the means by which a story is told for Ricoeur.

The premier exponent of broad narrative inquiry in organisation studies is the work of Czarniawska (Czarniawska 1997; Czarniawska 1998; Czarniawska and Gagliardi 2003; Czarniawska 2004; Czarniawska 2007) who has also an interest in sensemaking research and an appreciation for Weick (Czarniawska 2005; Czarniawska 2006). When it comes to narrative identity in organisations, an example would be a study on authenticity in leadership and the narrative self by Sparrowe (2005). Boyce (1996) provides a critical review of the literature on storytelling and organisation studies.

In the realm of organisational communication, Brown (1986) offers a sensemaking approach to organisational narratives. A different author, Brown (2006) studied organisational identity from a narrative perspective as well as sensemaking narratives specifically (Brown, Stacey, and Nandhakumar 2008). Some consultants and practitioners try to structure organisational sensemaking with various techniques involving narratives. For instance Snowden developed a consultancy around offering a method called SenseMaker® for eliciting micro-narratives in aid of organisational sensemaking.[11] Another example is the software HyperStoria that is designed "to support story analysis, representations sharing, and sense emergence [...] till the elaboration of the causal and decision trees" (Soulier and Caussanel 2002). They liken their goal to "narrative knowledge modelling".

As these examples show, one should be aware that the concept narrative identity is not necessarily used in the philosophical hermeneutic sense that Ricoeur intended. Far more frequently used is the concept of narrative identity as Lucius-Hoene and Deppermann (2004, p. 75) define it:

[11] http://cognitive-edge.com/sensemaker/

"[N]arrative identity as the target for empirical studies is simply the ways in which a person in concrete interaction situations [for instance a research interview] engage in identity work through a narrative representation and construction of relevant situated aspects of his/her identity".[12] Thus for perhaps the vast majority of narrative identity studies, the narrativity referred to is merely the narrative form of the interviews that form the data for what is essentially psychological research. The narrative identity is only the narrative expression from which the identity can be read through analyses that very much conform to psychological or structural narratological methods. Though many of these studies cite Ricoeur as an authority, their focus and methods differ vastly from his, and his conception of a narrative identity is not seriously entertained. Instead they are informed by a qualitative research paradigm centred on interviews to induce narratives (Riessman 1993). The argument and procedures of a typical narrative identity study of this type is described next to show that narrative inquiry in social psychology[13] (performed typically as life-story or autobiographical research interviews) is as interested in the structure and performance of the story as in the presentation and construction of identity by means of the story.

Consider the following study as a good example of a non-Ricoeurian use of the concept of narrative identity. Pedersen (2008) studies 'narrative identity work' in health care organisations. Pedersen targets the concern that feminization of health care professions will lower the status of those working in the field. She regards this fear as unfounded, because in her research she demonstrates the diversity of material drawn upon during the identity construction of health care professionals. She found that gender is much less important for the creation of professional identity than interaction with patients and colleagues. She reconstructs the identity construction process

[12] My loose translation.

[13] See for instance: Hermans, H. J. M. and Hermans-Jansen, E. (1995) *Self-Narratives. The Construction of Meaning in Psychotherapy*; Mishler, E. G. (1995) "Models of narrative analysis: A topology", in *Journal of Narrative and Life History* 5 (2), pp. 87–123; Sarbin, T. (Ed.) (1986) *Narrative Psychology: The Storied Nature of Human Conduct* New York, NY: Praeger.

through an analysis of narrative interviews with various health care professionals. In other words, Pedersen (2008, p. 41) relied on fieldwork in a medical ward and collected interviews about personal identity stories (with 2 social workers, 2 nurses, 1 physician, 2 ergo therapists, 2 physiotherapists, and 1 social counselor) and interpersonal identity stories (with 2 physicians, 2 nurses, 2 social workers, 2 physiotherapists, and 2 ergo therapists). She employed an interview technique that would induce storytelling (Pedersen 2008, p. 42)—therefore narrative interviews that yielded stories from the professionals about encounters with patients with a personal relation dimension and stories about meetings with colleagues with an interpersonal relation dimension. After selecting the narrative fragments and transcribing them the narratives were coded by type into intimacy, distance, spatial, and supportive stories in the case of the identity work between professional and patient and into traditional stories of being a therapist, battle stories of being a physician, and status stories of being a nurse. From her analysis of these various story types and the identity positions taken up by the narrators, Pedersen (2008, p. 48) concludes that the identity work of health care employees displays a hybrid character that contributes to their identity diversity.

5.3.7 Summary

Taken together we see firstly, that an organisational sensemaking perspective on organisational identity fits very well with the interactionist perspectives, and some of the sensemaking research done about organisational identity can be typified as symbolic interactionist at a more abstract level. It is also possible to draw parallels between the concerns of sensemaking theory and that of social identity theory and psychoanalysis, given the social psychological roots of sensemaking theory. Turning to narrative inquiry the picture is more complex. As far as the field of organisation studies in general is concerned, narrative identity is a psychological category inspired by the work of McAdams. However, there are also studies that use sensemaking ideas for the interpretation of narratives, or try to elicit narratives in the

service of organisational sensemaking. This is not surprising, because identity construction and story-telling are both components of organisational sensemaking theory. The next sections will consider organisational identity from the sensemaking perspective specifically, before we turn to the extent to which narrative has been theorised in the fields of sensemaking and hermeneutics. As we've seen in the section on narrative identity as an approach to organisational identity, reflection on identity is mostly psychological and on narrative mostly as form. With these theoretical positions that are variously taken up to study organisational identity as background, we are in a position to compare Weick's notion of identity construction as the ground of sensemaking to Ricoeur's notion of narrative identity. In doing so we are aware that these two authors also influenced some of these approaches just described and developed their positions for their own purposes. In the case of Weick, he discusses identity construction (at least in his book) on the level of individual sensemaking and we have to infer from the later restatement of his model of the organisational sensemaking process published much later what role identity construction may play on the collective level. Similarly, Ricoeur developed the concept of narrative identity in the context of personal identity and we'll have to consider objections to narrative identity as the basis for thinking about organisational identity.

5.4 Sensemaking and identity construction

We've introduced identity construction as a property of sensemaking earlier in section 2.2.1, but now we are in a position to consider it more fully in terms of its underlying identity concept and its emphasis on continuing construction.

As we've seen, according to Weick, identity construction is a central property of sensemaking, indeed all sensemaking is "grounded in identity construction" (Weick 1995, p. 20). Weick argues that although sensemaking is an automatic and ongoing background activity, it is brought into focus and becomes intentional when people experience an identity threat (Weick 1995, p. 23). Cognitive dissonance theory is employed by Weick to argue

that sensemaking is an activity "in service of maintaining a consistent, positive self-conception" (Weick 1995, p. 23). Note that Weick does not ground sensemaking in identity (the outcome of the construction process), but in the construction itself. Weick is sensitive to the fact that identity is never a finished product but a process (if you follow Mead) or an always-becoming or being-towards (if you follow Heidegger).

Taking a symbolic interactionist position, Weick (1995, p. 23) argues that people learn about their own identities, by projecting them to an audience and making adjustments based on the consequences perceived. Weick demonstrates this point by referring to a study of the New York Port Authority by Dutton and Dukerich (1991). Weick (1995, p. 23) notes that the metaphor of the mirror used by Dutton and Dukerich, reminds of Cooley's notion of a looking-glass self.[14] Dutton and Dukerich work with a distinction between image and identity, where "the organization's image was an important mirror for interpretation" (Dutton and Dukerich 1991, p. 542). Image can be defined as "shared cognitive representations or views of an organization" (Whetten 2006, p. 228). Whilst the identity of the organisation has to do with features that differentiate the organisation from others, the image of the organisation is either representations of how members want outsiders to view their organisation or of what members think about how others view the organisation (Whetten 2006, p. 228). Dutton and Dukerich (1991, p. 551) conclude that organisational identity and image play an important role in how important organisational issues are interpreted, how members react, and how they commit to organisational actions. For these reasons they believe that organisational research should take into account "where individuals look, what they see, and whether or not they like the reflection in the mirror" (Dutton and Dukerich 1991, p. 551).

From the preceding it is clear that the construction of identity depends

[14]Schutz and Luckmann (1974, p. 67) also relies on Cooley to make this point that a we-relation depends on grasping the attitude of the other to oneself: "The mirroring of self in the esperience of the stranger (more exactly, in my grasp of the Other's experience of me) is a constitutive element of the we-relation. As Charles H. Cooley has already shown in a penetrating fashion, the reciprocal mirroring is of fundamental import for the process of socialization".

on social interaction. However, the social context is not constant or neutral in this interactive process. Since projections can potentially change the social context, some identity work is aimed at shaping the context, whilst simultaneously reacting to the expected and perceived actual feedback. The interaction is further complicated by the fact that the social context consists of other actors learning about their own identities by projecting their own identities in response to any particular projected identity. On the basis of this insight Weick (1995, pp. 23–24) argues that the self, rather than the environment, is in need of interpretation.

The self-referential nature of sensemaking might increase the risk for misunderstanding or non-sense. To deal with varying contexts, identity needs a requisite variety of resources to draw upon for sense to be made. Weick solves this issue by incorporating the notion of a 'parliament of selves' from Mead: "The more selves I have access to, the more meanings I should be able to extract and impose in any situation" (Weick 1995, p. 24). Mead (1934b, pp. 142–143) expressed the idea in this way: "We divide ourselves up in all sorts of different selves [...] answering to all sorts of different social reactions [...] A multiple personality is in a certain sense normal [...] with reference to the community to which we belong, and the situation in which we find ourselves". Of course, many questions remain: It is not clear whether the various identity roles demand a fully fledged identity each or whether each gives insight to a part of identity. The question therefore remains whether the constructed identity is the result of a selection from a number of selves, or the refraction of a subset of the self.

This idea of having access to multiple selves for the extraction and imposition of meaning is a corollary to the stock of available frames proposed by Goffman (1974). The various selves in our parliament are sets of frames available to be imposed on the stimuli in the flow of experience in order to extract cues which we elaborate into sense. Sensemaking is grounded in identity construction also in this respect: not only does identity concerns determine preferences for certain cues and frames, the self invoked from the available stock of selves is a frame too. The construction and curation of identity therefore aids the minimal sensible structure at the heart of sense-

making, namely the act of framing of cues. In the next section we show that identity issues are approached very differently in the philosophical hermeneutics perspective.

5.5 Hermeneutics and narrative identity

Ricoeur introduces the concept of "narrative identity" in his three volumes of *Time and Narrative* (Ricoeur 1984b; Ricoeur 1985; Ricoeur 1988), develops it further in a *Philosophy Today* article (Ricoeur 1991b), and returns to it in *Oneself as Another* (Ricoeur 1992). It is perhaps easiest to start at the later statement of his argument and then work back to the distinction between selfhood (*ipse*) and sameness (*idem*) which is constitutive of his concept of narrative identity.

5.5.1 Identity in narrative

The later Ricoeur increasingly devoted his attention to identity as an ethical and hermeneutic problem. *Oneself as Another* (Ricoeur 1992) represents the mature statement of his ideas about these matters. He devotes one study in that book, "The Self and Narrative Identity", to work out the implications of the dialectic between *idem* (sameness) and *ipse* (selfhood) that is implied by his concept of narrative identity (Ricoeur 1992, p. 140). He wants to show how emplotment makes it possible to access on the side of permanence aspects from the side of sameness. When the notion of emplotment is brought to bear on characters and not only focuses on linking actions it uncovers the dialectic between sameness (*idem*) and selfhood (*ipse*) (Ricoeur 1992, pp. 140–141). Ricoeur (1992, p. 143) states that moving from a focus on action to character in narrative brings us closer to his conception of narrative identity. To be sure a character is a narrative element as the one performing the action. The emplotment of action results in the character's identity being emplotted also.

> The person, understood as a character in a story, is not an entity distinct from his or her 'experiences.' Quite the opposite:

> the person shares the condition of dynamic identity peculiar to the story recounted. The narrative constructs the identity of the character, what can be called his or her narrative identity, in constructing that of the story told. It is the identity of the story that makes the identity of the character. (Ricoeur 1992, pp. 147–148)

The narrative submits the identity of the character to 'imaginative variations' enabling the character to mediate between selfhood and sameness. Ricoeur (1992, pp. 148–149) supports this point with many examples from fictional literature. Moreover, those 'imaginative variations' unlock proposed worlds to our imagination, leading to a consideration of new possibilities in the world.

Later in the same study Ricoeur contrasts his notion of a narrative identity with MacIntyre's notion of the unity of a human life (MacIntyre 2007, pp. 204–225) as part of his consideration of "the good life". In MacIntyre's view the role of narrative is to integrate one's life and he sees "human actions as [...] enacted narratives" (MacIntyre 2007, p. 211). The point he wants to make here is that narratives are not the product of writers inspired by events without narrative structure, the narrative form is present in life itself.[15] This is not exactly the same point that Ricoeur made with the prefiguration process of mimesis_1, because for MacIntyre stories are enacted before they are told (MacIntyre 2007, p. 129), and for Ricoeur there is no mimesis_1 without mimesis_3. Since MacIntyre is interested in enacted stories of everyday life, he does not concern himself with fictional narratives and the relation between fiction and history. Ricoeur (1992, p. 159) notes that "[f]or MacIntyre, the difficulties tied to the idea of a refiguration of life by fiction does not arise". Ricoeur's detour via fictional narratives had the advantage that the roles of action and character are easier to see than in everyday narratives, but of course he had to reconnect fiction with life through reading (Ricoeur 1992, p. 159).

[15] This is related to the point Weick makes about why stories are such powerful vocabularies of sensemaking, because they share the structure and flow of lived experience.

However, Ricoeur thinks by focusing on enacted stories rather than the more fully developed stories of literary fiction, MacIntyre missed some aspects, and Ricoeur considers some objections with a view to develop his own position more clearly. In the life-stories that MacIntyre is interested in, the roles of narrator, character, and author become blurred. Furthermore, in life one is at best a coauthor, which poses a problem for any explanation of identity tied to authorship (Ricoeur 1992, pp. 159–160). In addition, without fiction it is really hard to identify notions of beginning and end. "It is this closure […] that is lacking in what A. MacIntyre in *After Virtue* called the narrative unity of life" (Ricoeur 1992, p. 160). He points out that we live our lives without a narrative beginning, since we don't remember our births and likewise we are never in a position to narratively grasp our deaths (Ricoeur 1992, p. 160). Although it is possible to compose several stories without a clear narrative beginning and end, but these various plots are not sufficient to develop the overall story that captures the narrative unity of one's life (Ricoeur 1992, p. 161). Furthermore, a person's life-story is entangled with the life-stories of others. Ricoeur (1992, p. 161) says: "It is precisely by reason of this entanglement, as much as by being open-ended on both sides, that life histories differ from literary ones …Can one then still speak of the narrative unity of life?" Finally, self-understanding depends on remembrance and anticipation, so that the activity of understanding only draw on the last phase of life that has to be joined to anticipations, expectations, or projects. Do these objections mean that fiction cannot be applied to life?

Ricoeur (1992, p. 161) thinks that these objections only hold for a naïve notion of mimesis. It is true that the role of author is now equivocal, but one is at least a coauthor—in addition, "by narrating a life of which I am not the author as to existence, I make myself its coauthor as to its meaning" (Ricoeur 1992, p. 162). He settles for a position where the narrative unity of life is a hybrid of fabulation and experience. In fact the impossibility of grasping beginnings and ends in life is why we need fiction to make it coherent by "organizing it retrospectively" (Ricoeur 1992, p. 162). In addition we have the experience of mini-endings in the completion of projects

and completing actions, "[l]iterature helps us in a sense to fix the outline of these provisional ends" (Ricoeur 1992, p. 162). As to the problem of intertwined histories, Ricoeur (1992, p. 162) sees the possibility of framing narratives within one-another and in this way fiction can help us clarify aspects of our actual lives. Finally, he believes that "literary narratives and life histories, far from being mutually exclusive, are complementary, despite, or even because of, their contrast" (Ricoeur 1992, p. 163). This brings him back to his argument that our exposure to narratives is what gives us the ability to narrativise our experiences in life, because "narrative is part of life before being exiled into writing; it returns to life along the multiple paths of appropriation and at the price of the multiple tensions just mentioned" (Ricoeur 1992, p. 163).

5.5.2 Narrative identity

Ricoeur (1988) makes a distinction between "being the same" (*idem*-identity) with the emphasis on sameness, and "oneself as self-same" (*ipse*-identity) with the emphasis on continuity in spite of change. This distinction offers a more sophisticated way of dealing with the tension between coherence and change with which we concluded our discussion on organisational identity as a problem in section 5.2.1. From this perspective identity is only an issue in a context of change and diversity, yet these things can also make identity unstable.

Ricoeur (1992, p. 116) argues that we can define identity as sameness in the following senses: uniqueness, similarity and continuity, or as permanence over time (Ricoeur 1992, p. 117). With regards to permanence over time, sameness (*idem*) can mean continuity and uniqueness, but selfhood (*ipse*) stresses fidelity to the past. Ricoeur argues that the dialectic between *idem* and *ipse* can only be mediated narratively and it is through seeing ourselves through narrative that we give our lives coherence and a sense of "connectedness of life" (Ricoeur 1992, p. 115).

At this point we can consider the question of what is different about Ricoeur's account of a narrative identity and the account of identity offered by

Mead, which in turn influenced the interpretivist tradition that influenced and is invoked by Weick specifically. We are helped in this regard by the work of Ezzy (1998; 2005) who contrasts the *idem* and *ipse* from Ricoeur with *I* and *Me* from Mead.

> Mead's distinction between the 'I' and the 'me' does not directly parallel Ricoeur's distinction between selfhood (*ipse*) and identity (*idem*). Selfhood refers to the reflexive nature of the self as a whole, whereas the 'I' refers to the prereflective 'response of the organism to the attitudes of others' (Mead 1934:175). On the other hand, the 'me' as 'the organized set of attitudes of others which one himself [sic] assumes' (Mead 1934: 175), has some similarities to Ricoeur's concept of identity (*idem*); that is, the story one tells oneself, or others, about oneself. (Ezzy 2005, p. 46)

According to Ezzy (1998, p. 245), Ricoeur's notion of selfhood or *ipse* refers to Heidegger's *Dasein*, the kind of self-reflexive entity that has an awareness of its own existence. One of the outcomes of *Dasein*'s self-awareness is narrative emplotment about itself which corresponds to Ricoeur's narrative identity. Whilst Mead's notion of 'me' is social in that it contains the view that I think others have of me, Ricoeur's concept of identity is also social, because identity is not a property or essence of oneself, but assent of the hearers to the narrative that I am the same person (Ezzy 1998, p. 245). Furthermore, Ricoeur offers an explanation of the "narrative structure that provides the self-concept with a concordant, temporal unity" which is absent in Mead (Ezzy 1998, p. 245).

Ricoeur (1992, p. 118) then introduces two models of permanence over time, namely character and keeping one's word. Character is "the set of distinctive marks which permit the reidentification of a human individual as the same" (Ricoeur 1992, p. 119). These marks can be habits, dispositions or traits to act in predictable ways. In the case of character there is a complete overlap between *idem* and *ipse*, and in the case of keeping one's word represents a gap between the two. Despite changes that may occur,

if one is faithful to your word, you demonstrate that you are still the same person with a certain permanence over time.

In contrast to ideas of identity as a property of a person—whether physiological (embodiment) or psychological (personality traits)—Ricoeur thinks that we have an identity that can be considered to endure and stay consistent over time only because the discordant experiences and actions in our lives can be ordered narratively into a concordant whole. This narrative construction of one's life has to be coherent not only to oneself, but more importantly to others, because similar to literary narratives that require readers to close it through mimesis$_3$, one needs to interact with others in order to have a narrative identity. This interaction takes place in a social setting where actors actions are mutually interdependent. In fact, in explaining the title of *Oneself as Another* in the preface, Ricoeur (1992, pp. 1–3) points out that selfhood implies the other. Whereas *idem* identity differentiates one from the other, the *ipseity* of narrative identity connects the two in a "dialectic of *self* and the *other than self*" (Ricoeur 1992, p. 3).

Note that Ricoeur's concept of narrative identity is not the same as the identity narratives that are the objects of life-story research. For Ricoeur, narrative integration is in the service of a persisting self, whilst identity narratives are not necessarily aimed at construing permanence over time, although they display this form of what MacIntyre (2007, p. 204) calls "the unity of a human life". For instance, an important connecting device between cues and frames in the process of sensemaking is the use of stories (Weick 1995, pp. 127–128), but in this case narrative merely facilitates identity construction. In contrast, in the case of Ricoeur's narrative identity, the self draws on narratives (fictional or otherwise), and the coherence they offer by means of emplotment, in order to reflect on who one is and how one (should) relate to others. After all identity is something that has to be interpreted, Ricoeur (1991b, p. 80) says: "Narrative mediation underlines this remarkable aspect about knowledge of the self as being an interpretation."

5.6 Collective identity as narrative identity

Now that Ricoeur's notion of narrative identity has been described, we can return our attention to narrative approaches in organisational analysis. An issue that Weick (1995) notes, and that we alluded to before, is that in professional contexts the established rhetoric (or language game) is the paradigmatic language of data, trends, and projections. However, as Bruner (1991) points out, the mode of human experience is that of narrative. There are two direction to go from here. Technocrats and managers can dress their "facts" up in story form in an ideological fashion. This is what Weick implies with his various recommendations to management, such as "talk the walk" (Weick 1995, p. 182), "every manager an author" (Weick 1995, p. 183), and "every manager a historian" (Weick 1995, p. 184). Alternatively the moments where participants in organisations switch to narrative mode from their ideal paradigmatic data-driven mode are the ones that students of organisation should attend to, because it is there that the organisation is revealed.

One immediate problem is how to study those moments. It seem problematic to directly transposing psychological life-story research to the study of organisations, because organisational narratives are often not fully-fledged narratives; they do not have all the features of narrative as proposed by Labov and Waletzky (1967) in their famous article about narrative analysis, and therefore they do not lend themselves to most narrative inquiry techniques. There is a difference between the 'natural' narratives found in organisational life and the narratives elicited by narrative inquiry researchers, whether they be organisational texts or management interviews. Organisational researchers have various ways to deal with this discrepancy. One way is to make a distinction between small and big stories (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008), identifying narrative fragments as small stories that do not have all the features expected in fictional narratives or life stories. Although the raw material for analysis is always specific narratives, to understand how narrative functions in organising it is important to understand that it is not the specific narratives that count, but the narrativity

in prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration.

Brown (2006, p. 5) cites a number of issues with the theorisation of collective identity. He notes that some people treat identity as a metaphor for talking about collectives, others conceive of collectives as super-persons, similar to the way that organisations are considered to be legal persons, or people refer to the shared characteristics of the collective. He notes that all three these options are problematic and that a "narrative approach offers ways of theorisation that mitigate these problems" (Brown 2006, p. 5). There remain however many pitfalls and he lists five features that distinguish narratives in collective identities from the usual personal identity life-story narratives. 1. In collectives there will be multiple narratives (Brown 2006, p. 6), 2. although there will be many shared storylines, there will be contested stories too (Brown 2006, pp. 6–7), 3. the stories will be polyphonic or heteroglossic (Brown 2006, p. 7), 4. whilst there is continuity, there is also elaboration (Brown 2006, p. 7). With these things in mind, the question is whether we should conceive of the organisational narrative identity as the totality of stories told, or the aggregate (as Brown (2006, p. 7) suggests), or perhaps those that are activated in a particular context? There are no easy answers to these questions, but it is clear that Weick's conception of plausible stories as restoring the whole of sense falters in the face of fragmentary and contested organisational storytelling.

As part of his consideration of historical narratives Ricoeur (1992, p. 123) cites examples of nations having "quasi-characters" in the story of history, but he also warns of the ideological pitfalls associated with applying it to the identity of historical communities. In the case of sensemaking the appropriate organisational identity depends on the context—the self invoked to make sense shifts with the context and it depends on the resources available in the context and the skills of the author whether the constructed identity is plausible or not. In contrast, the narrative identity concept sees identity as configured at a particular point in time whilst simultaneously refigured. It is a subtle difference, but unlike for sensemaking theory, it does not involve the selection of a particular appropriate self, or one facet of the hybrid identities. Instead, narrative identity is the persistence of the

self amidst changed circumstances and priorities.

Of course, Ricoeur developed his concept of narrative identity in the context of personal identity and ethics, but he also applies it to collective identity on a grand scale. One can argue that organisational identity is more fragile than both personal and cultural or national identities. On the one hand, organisations endure whilst its members are in principle interchangeable and subject to replacement. On the other hand, individuals are not thrown into organisational membership the way they are thrown into life or membership of a particular culture or a nation. Organisations then, do not exist for their own sake, their existence must be justified and in that sense their identity construction and self-interpretation demands perhaps greater reflexivity than that of persons or nations. However, the level of analysis is not an insurmountable problem, because narrative operates and presupposes all levels from individuals to societies. Ricoeur applied the notion of narrative identity to communities: "The notion of narrative identity also indicates its fruitfulness in that it can be applied to a community as well as to an individual. We can speak of the self-constancy of a community, just as we spoke of it as applied to an individual subject. Individual and community are constituted in their identity by taking up narratives that become for them their actual history" (Ricoeur 1988, p. 247).

Ricoeur's narrative solution has the limitation that, in the end, narrative does not succeed in capturing time and inevitable change absolutely. Identity as permanence over time is a configuration that has to be refigured over and over again until in the long run it must fail. Stated differently, a final configuration is not possible, it is impossible to arrive at a final answer of who we are as an organisation, instead the answer is constantly deferred. However, this does not mean that reflecting on who we are and where should we be going is meaningless. What organisational identity can learn from Ricoeur is that our need for coherence and consistency must be seen against the background of our context of plurality and change.

Another feature of organisational life is that unlike personal life, many organisational projects are imposed and the time needed to come to an understanding is subject to fast approaching deadlines. This is of course a

temporal feature that Ricoeur did not need to address. Weick is far more sensitive to this issue and his concept of enactment includes that moment where we need to act on our partial understandings. So whilst it is true that when participating in work, a lot more is going on than just acting out one's organisational role, and people are invested in their practices also on the level of identity, it is also true that in modern organisations action is often demanded before these matters are sufficiently settled. Weick's point is that our actions in those situations influence how these things are settled. It seems that as far as the concrete problem of organisational identity is concerned, Ricoeur's notion of narrative identity is instructive. His message is that when it comes to organisational identity we can never escape interpretation and reinterpretation. When we consider organisational identity from the perspective of Weick, the message is that in organisations we need to act and often we need to act before we fully understand. In the conclusion, we leave the domain of organisational identity to consider whether Weick's emphasis on enactment and Ricoeur's emphasis on fluid continuity can be aligned by a better positioning of narrative in the model of organisational sensemaking processes.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The foregoing analyses situated Weick's organisational sensemaking theory as a social psychological restatement of the interpretive sociology of Schutz. It was shown that the way in which Weick explains the mechanism of sensemaking relies heavily on Schutz's arguments about the phenomenology of the social world, with the major modification of couching it in a particular version of cognitive dissonance theory. Furthermore, starting from social psychological research findings, Weick came to a social constructivist position regarding the nature of organisational cognition, but not by way of typical constructionist arguments, instead by way of interpretivist accounts. This makes for a very special type of constructionism, one that is uncritical and rooted in the findings of positivist social psychological experiments. Whilst this accounts for the 'a-political' character of organisational sensemaking theory and for its attractiveness as a way to reveal what is 'really' the case in organisations; this approach is unsatisfactory to account for organisational phenomena requiring interpretation. For all its interpretivist background, the empirical program of organisational sensemaking research has fallen back on positivist research methods that run counter to its purported interpretivist commitments.

The sort of understanding reached by sensemaking, as conceptualised by Weick, is the result of the imposition of frames on cues from the flow of experience. An alternative conception of reaching understandings was iden-

tified in the form of philosophical hermeneutics—a perspective steeped in a long tradition of interpretation. Philosophical hermeneutics differs from sensemaking theory in that it conceptualises the interpretive triggerpoint differently, not as the result of dissonance, but as a realisation of misunderstanding: it sees unity in understanding and application, it mediates between various perspectives rather than choosing among them, it stresses understanding as a process which can never reach a final correct interpretation (whilst at the same time holding fast to the idea that some interpretations are better than others), and it sees understanding as a unitary event that involves the interpreter in contrast to the sensemaking multi-step sensemaking process.

With organisational sensemaking, Weick does not offer a specific testable theory (nor did he intend to); instead he offers a 'middle-range theory' at a higher level of generality. At the same time, organisational sensemaking is not just an abstract perspective instead of a theory, because at its core is a model of organisational sensemaking processes, namely the ecological change and enactment-selection-retention sequence with its feedback of identity construction on selection and enactment. However, this model does not cover the entire theory either, because it is embedded in a collection of resources that Weick gathered from social psychology and interpretivist social science. People doing sensemaking research draw on these resources as they become relevant. While it is true that many of Weick's followers only select from these peripheral resources and neglect the sensemaking model that these are supposed to support, it is a criticism of the field of sensemaking research and not of organisational sensemaking as a theory.

Philosophical hermeneutics is a perspective at the same level of generality as the interpretivism that influenced Weick. It is a perspective in the sense that its proponents employ a constellation of related concepts and guiding ideas rooted in Gadamer's insistence on the finitude of human understanding. Whilst it does not offer a method per se, it is an 'epistemic stance' for the practice of inquiry, which entails the use of selected methods, and offer a critique of positivist approaches that glorify methods to the point of scientism. Social constructionists see meaning as made during the

interaction between actors, and interpretivists see human action as meaningful (to the social actors themselves)—these two perspectives are fused in sensemaking theory with Weick's focus on "authoring as well as reading" (Weick 1995, p. 7), or enactment and framing. By contrast philosophical hermeneutics sees meaning as a coming to understanding or something that is negotiated rather than created or discovered. This continual negotiation means that reaching a final meaning is impossible. Gadamer's notion of 'application' implies that to expect to first come to a final meaning in a correct interpretation and then applying the insight to a situation is to misunderstand the process entirely; instead understanding is a unitary event that is part of an ongoing engagement with the world. Incidentally, as Weick's notion of the 'ongoing' character of sensemaking shows, sensemaking theory is sensitive to this point.

We have then before us a model of the organisational sensemaking process that draws from a pool of theoretical resources gathered by Weick from social psychology, interpretivist social science and social constructionism. In the preceding chapters we identified various places where sensemaking theory struggles with, for instance:

- the levels of analysis between individual and organisational sensemaking in section 2.2.4,
- the distinction between sensemaking and interpretation as a result of a narrow understanding of interpretation in section 4.3,
- the limits of the framing metaphor to capture the interpretive activity that matters for organising in section 4.5.1,
- the under-theorisation of narrative as content for sensemaking, rather than as a constitutive aspect 5.1.2.

The question is which of the concepts and resources from philosophical hermeneutics can be usefully added to the pool of sensemaking resources to mitigate some of these larger issues, and at the same time support the core model of organisational sensemaking processes.

As a first step in this direction, the previous chapter described one area of organisational inquiry, namely the field of organisation identity, to demonstrate the differences between organisational sensemaking approaches and that of philosophical hermeneutics when applied to a concrete organisational management and research problem. Considered next to Ricoeur's notion of narrative identity and his argument about the relationship between narrative and time, the organisational sensemaking concepts of identity construction as the ground for sensemaking and stories as a vocabulary of sequence seem somewhat deficient in places. We've identified Weick's treatment of stories as one area that is under-theorised in particular. In addition, the framing of cues device that Weick borrowed from Goffman's frame analysis is not a vehicle for a proper consideration of temporality. In contrast Ricoeur offers a far more sophisticated approach to temporality in his studies on time and narrative. To be fair, Weick did add a temporal aspect to Goffman's frame analysis by considering the present moment the cues and the past moments the frames from which a sensemaker selects and imposes an appropriate framing. Through acts of framing instead of narrativity change over time is made sensible. Weick considers stories as cues, in other words the content to be framed, or as content that creates new plausible frames, instead of seeing them as the device that connects past, present, and future. Our detour through philosophical hermeneutics' grappling with the epistemological and ontological status of both fictional and historical narratives, now offers the insight that what matters about stories in sensemaking is not that they are content resistant to framing that leads to frame updating or frame shifts, but that it is their narrativity that matters. Rather than the vivid verisimilitude of their content that makes them useful for achieving plausible sense, what matters about stories is that they establish continuity between past and present. Ricoeur offers a sophisticated account of how this continuity is established through a three-fold process of mimesis involving prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration.

Theorising stories from the perspective of hermeneutics in terms of their narrativity suggests that in sensemaking theory narrative is best considered as a constitutive element for organisational sensemaking, rather than

as merely the content of sensemaking operations. In the model of organisational sensemaking processes, what counts is not just the connecting ability of narrative, but its potential for ordering, reordering, and most importantly re-description. The organisational sensemaking process is the cognitive corollary of the activity of organising: "Because people have some control over words, meanings, and actions, they can exert some control over the ways they organise themselves, the opportunities they discover, and the projects they pursue" (Weick 1995, p. 181). In this Weick sees a mutual structuration between the process of sensemaking and the activity or organising. "The close fit between processes of organizing and processes of sensemaking illustrates the recurring argument that people organize to make sense of equivocal inputs and enact this sense back into the world to make that world more orderly" (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld 2005, p. 414). Following Ricoeur's analysis of the relation between time and narrative, it is possible to see that it is the dual enactment-narration aspects of sensemaking that selects, (re)orders and links elements from available resources remembered from history and shared among participants within enacted current situations. Furthermore, the mimetic cycle of narrative opens up alternative conceptions of reality which have far-reaching implications for social reality, especially with regard to how we see the nature of identity and action in organisations. Whilst for Weick narratives are a primarily an organising process where some content is selected, connected, and then retained, from the perspective of philosophical hermeneutics narratives open up alternate worlds that not only provides coherence through narrative mediation, but the re-description of reality it offers also impacts the way we see ourselves and the way we see our actions.

The implication is that organisations should not be seen as the collective behaviour of participants, not as institutions enabling yet constraining their members, or as the routines that are the products of the managerial mind, but as discourses around acting on goals and purposes not for its own sake, but with respect to the interpretation of some task or outcome that is related to the organisational identity. One way to misunderstand this view of organisations is to think that one of the three kinds of mimesis that

Ricoeur described belongs exclusively to the domain of management as the 'top echelon' in charge of the organisation, rather than to the domain of management as the process of organising. Weick's example of Thayer's view of leadership as framing the world for followers is a case in point. Whilst visionaries can help others mimetic activity, ultimately management overestimates its role by seeing their task as telling employees what things should mean for them. Seen through the lens of narrativity, 'management' and organising happens at every level, because of the plurivocity and contested nature of narratives and the continual cycle of narrative mimesis that forms the basis for organisational sensemaking at all levels of the organisation.

Bibliography

Aaltio-Marjosola, I. (1994). "From a 'grand story' to multiple narratives? Studying an organizational change project". In: *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 7.5, pp. 56–67.

Abma, T. (2000). "Fostering learning-in-organizing through narration: questioning myths and stimulating multiplicity in two performing art schools". In: *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* 9, pp. 211–31.

— (2003). "Learning by telling". In: *Management Learning* 34.2, pp. 221–41.

Ackoff, R. L.. (1973). "Planning in the Systems Age". In: *SankhyaÌ : The Indian Journal of Statistics* 35.2, pp. 149–164.

Albert, S. and D. A. Whetten (1985). "Organizational identity". In: *Research in Organizational Behavior*. Ed. by L. L. Cummings and B. M. Staw. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, pp. 263–295.

— (2004). "Organizational identity". In: *Organizational Identity: A Reader*. Ed. by M. J. Hatch and M. Schultz. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, pp. 89–118.

Allard-Poesi, F. (2005). "The paradox of sensemaking in organizational analysis". In: *Organization* 12.2, pp. 169–196.

Allport, F. H. (1962). "A structuronomic conception of behavior: Individual and collective: I. Structural theory and the master problem of social

psychology." In: *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 64.1, pp. 3–30.

Alvesson, M. and D. Karreman (2000). "Varieties of discourse: on the study of organizations through discourse analysis". In: *Human Relations* 53.9, pp. 1125–1149.

Anderson, M. H. (2006). "How can we know what we think until we see what we said?: A citation and citation context analysis of Karl Weick's The Social Psychology of Organizing". In: *Organization Studies* 27.11, pp. 1675–1692.

Annison, M. H. and E. J. O'Connor (2002). "Building trust and collaboration between physicians and administrators.(Leadership)". In: *Physician Executive* 28.2, pp. 48–53.

Aronson, E. (1968). "Dissonance theory: progress and problems". In: *Theories of Cognitive Consistency: A Sourcebook*. Ed. by R. P. Abelson et al. Chicago, IL: Rand McNally, pp. 5–27.

Ashforth, B. E. (1998). "Becoming: how does the process of identification unfold?" In: *Identity in Organizations: Developing Theory through Conversations*. Ed. by D. A. Whetten and P. Godfrey. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, pp. 213–222.

Bamberg, M. and A. Georgakopoulou (2008). "Small stories as a new perspective in narrative and identity analysis". In: *Text & Talk* 28.3, pp. 377–396.

Bantz, C. R. (1993). *Understanding Organizations: Interpreting Organizational Communication Cultures*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press.

Barrett, F. J., E. H. Powley, and B. Pearce (2011). "Hermeneutic philosophy and organizational theory". In: *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*. Ed. by H. Tsoukas and R. Chia. Emerald Group Publishing, pp. 181–213.

Basbøll, T. (2010). "Softly constrained imagination: Plagiarism and misprision in the theory of organizational sensemaking". In: *Culture and Organization* 16.2, pp. 163–178.

Basbøll, T. (2012). *Any old map won't do: improving the credibility of storytelling in sensemaking scholarship*. Research rep. 4. Copenhagen, Denmark: Department of Organization, Copenhagen Business School.

Bauman, Z. (1992). *Hermeneutics and Social Science: Approaches to Understanding*. Aldershot, United Kingdom: Gregg Revivals.

Berger, P. and T. Luckmann (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

Bernstein, R. J. (1983). *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Bleicher, J. (1980). *Contemporary Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as Method, Philosophy and Critique*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Boje, D. M. (1991). "The storytelling organization: a study of story performance in an office-supply firm". In: *Administrative Science Quarterly* 36.1, pp. 106–126.

— (1994). "Organizational storytelling: struggles of pre-modern, modern and postmodern organizational learning discourses". In: *Management Learning* 25, pp. 433–461.

Boje, D. M., J. T. Luhman, and D. E. Baack (1999). "Hegemonic stories and encounters between storytelling organizations". In: *Journal of Management Inquiry* 8, pp. 340–360.

Boland, R. J. and W. F. Day (1989). "The experience of system design: a hermeneutic of organizational action". In: *Scandinavian Journal of Management* 5.2, pp. 87–104.

Bower, G. H. and M. C. Clark (1969). "Narrative stories as mediators for serial learning". In: *Psychodynamic Science* 14, pp. 181–182.

Boyce, M. E. (1996). "Organizational story and storytelling: a critical review". In: *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 9.5, pp. 5–26.

Brewis, J. (2004). "Refusing to be 'me'". In: *Identity Politics at Work: Resisting Gender, Gendering Resistance*. Ed. by R. Thomas, A. Mills, and J. Helms Mills. London, United Kingdom: Routledge, pp. 23–39.

Brockriede, W. (1974). "Rhetorical criticism as argument". In: *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 60, pp. 165–174.

Brown, A. D. (1997). "Narcissim, identity, and legitimacy". In: *Academy of Management Review* 22, pp. 643–686.

— (1998). "Narrative, politics and legitimacy in an IT implementation". In: *Journal of Management Studies* 35, pp. 35–58.

— (2006). "A Narrative Approach to Collective Identities". In: *Journal of Management Studies* 43.4, pp. 731–753.

Brown, A. D. and M. Humphreys (2003). "Epic and tragic tales: making sense of change". In: *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 39.2, pp. 121–144.

Brown, A. D., M. Humphreys, and P. M. Gurney (2005). "Narrative, identity and change: a case study of Laskarina Holidays". In: *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 18.4, pp. 312–326.

Brown, A. D. and M. R. Jones (1998). "Doomed to failure: narratives of inevitability and conspiracy in a failed IS project". In: *Organization Studies* 19.1, pp. 73–88.

Brown, A. D., P. Stacey, and J. Nandhakumar (2008). "Making sense of sensemaking narratives". In: *Human Relations* 61.8, pp. 1035–1062.

Brown, M. H. (1986). "Sense making and narrative forms: reality construction in organizations". In: *Organizational Communication: Emerging Perspectives*. Ed. by L. Thayer. Norwood, NJ: Ablex, pp. 71–84.

Brown, M. H. and J. J. McMillan (1991). "Culture as text: the development of an organizational narrative". In: *Southern Communication Journal* 57, pp. 49–60.

Browning, L D. (1992). "Lists and stories in organizational communication". In: *Communication Theory* 2, pp. 281–302.

Bruner, J. S. (1991). "The narrative construction of reality". In: *Critical Inquiry* 18, pp. 1–21.

Busacchi, V. (2017). "Hermeneutics 'Reloaded': from Science/Philosophy Dichotomy to Critical Hermeneutics". In: *Critical Hermeneutics* 1, pp. 41–65.

Carey, A. (1967). "The Hawthorne studies: a radical criticism". In: *American Sociological Review* 32, pp. 403–416.

Clark, S. H. (1990). *Paul Ricoeur*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Clegg, S. R. (1993). "Narrative, power and social theory". In: *Narrative and Social Control: Critical Perspectives*. Ed. by D. K. Mumby. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE, pp. 16–45.

Coase, R. H. (1937). "The nature of the firm". In: *Economica* 4.16, pp. 386–405.

Cooren, F. (1999). "Applying socio-semiotics to organizational communication: a new approach". In: *Management Communication Quarterly* 13, pp. 294–304.

Corley, K. G. and D. A. Gioia (2004). "Identity ambiguity and change in the wake of a corporate spin-off". In: *Administrative Science Quarterly* 49.2, pp. 173–208.

Craig-Lees, M. (2001). "Sense making: Trojan horse? Pandora's box?" In: *Psychology and Marketing* 18.5, pp. 513–526.

Culler, J. (2002). *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge Classics.

Czarniawska, B. (1997). *Narrating the Organization: Dramas of Institutional Identity*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

— (1998). *A Narrative Approach to Organization Studies*. Qualitative Research Methods Series. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

— (1999). *Writing Management: Organization Theory as a Literary Genre*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.

— (2000). *The Uses of Narrative in Organization Research*. Research rep. Gothenburg, Sweden: Gothenburg Research Institute.

— (2004). *Narratives in Social Science Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

— (2005). "Karl Weick: concepts, style and reflection". In: *The Sociological Review* 53.s1, pp. 267–278.

— (2006). "A Golden Braid: Allport, Goffman, Weick". In: *Organization Studies* 27.11, pp. 1661–1674.

Czarniawska, B. (2007). "Narrative inquiry in and about organizations". In: *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology*. Ed. by D. J. Clandinin. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, pp. 383–404.

Czarniawska, B. and P. Gagliardi, eds. (2003). *Narratives We Organize By*. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: John Benjamins Publishing.

Daft, R. L. (1983). "Learning the craft of organizational research". In: *Academy of Management Review* 8, pp. 539–547.

Daft, R. L. and K. E. Weick (1984). "Toward a model of organizations as interpretation systems". In: *The Academy of Management Review* 9.2, pp. 284–295.

Danto, A. (1985). *Narration and Knowledge*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Deal, T. E. and A. A. Kennedy (1982). *Corporate Cultures: The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Denzin, N. K. and C. M. Keller (1981). "Frame Analysis Reconsidered". In: *Contemporary Sociology* 10.1, pp. 52–60.

Dilthey, W. (1988). "The understanding of other persons and their life-expressions". In: *Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present*. Ed. by K. Müller-Vollmer. New York, NY: Continuum, pp. 152–164.

DiMaggio, P. and W. W. Powell (1983). "The iron cage revisited: Collective rationality and institutional isomorphism in organizational fields". In: *American Sociological Review* 48.2, pp. 147–160.

Driver, M. (2009). "Struggling with lack: A Lacanian perspective on organizational identity". In: *Organization Studies* 30.1, pp. 55–72.

Duncan, R. (1972). "Characteristics of organizational environments and perceived environmental uncertainty". In: *Administrative Science Quarterly* 17, pp. 313–327.

Dutton, J. E., J. M. Dukerich, and C. V. Harquail (1994). "Organizational images and member identification". In: *Administrative Science Quarterly* 39.2, pp. 239–263.

Dutton, J. and J. Dukerich (1991). "Keeping an eye on the mirror: image and identity in organizational adaptation." In: *Academy of Management Review* 34, pp. 517–554.

Eisenberg, Eric M. (2006). "Karl Weick and the aesthetics of contingency". In: *Organization Studies* 27.11, pp. 1693–1707.

Elstak, M. N. (2008). "The paradox of the organizational identity field". In: *Corporate Reputation Review* 11 (3), pp. 277–281.

Elstak, M. N. and C. B. M. Van Riel (2004). "Closing ranks: How a collective threat shifts salience from organizational to corporate identity". In: *Best Paper Proceedings of the 64th Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management*. New Orleans.

Ezzy, D. (1998). "Theorizing narrative identity: symbolic interactionism and hermeneutics". In: *Sociological Quarterly* 39, pp. 239–252.

— (2005). "Theorizing narrative identity: symbolic interactionism and hermeneutics". In: *Organization and Identity*. Ed. by A. Pullen and S. Linstead. London, United Kingdom: Routledge, pp. 40–54.

Feldman, M. S. and K. Skøldberg (2002). "Stories and the rhetoric of contrariety: subtexts of organizing (change)". In: *Culture and Organization* 8, pp. 274–292.

Feldman, S. P. (1990). "Stories as cultural creativity: on the relationship between symbolism and politics in organizational change". In: *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 13, pp. 45–58.

Festinger, L. (1957). *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Fiol, C. M. (2002). "Capitalizing on paradox: the role of language in transforming organizational identities". In: *Organization Science* 13.6, pp. 653–666.

Fiol, C. M., M. G. Pratt, and E. J. O'Connor (2009). "Managing intractable identity conflicts". In: *Academy of Management Review* 34.1, pp. 32–55.

Fisher, W. R. (1984). "Narration as a human communication paradigm: the case of public moral argument". In: *Communication Monographs* 51, pp. 1–22.

Foreman, P. and D. A. Whetten (2002). "Members' identification with multiply-identity organizations". In: *Organization Science* 13.6, pp. 618–635.

Gabriel, Y. (1991). "Turning facts into stories and stories into facts: A hermeneutic exploration of organizational folklore". In: *Human Relations* 44, pp. 857–875.

— (2016). "Psychoanalysis and the study of organization". In: *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy in Organization Studies*. Ed. by R. Mir, H. Willmott, and M. Greenwood. London, United Kingdom: Routledge, pp. 212–225.

Gadamer, H-G. (2004). *Truth and Method*. London, United Kingdom: Continuum.

— (2013). *Truth and Method*. London, United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Academic.

Galbraith, J. R. (1974). "Organization design: an information processing view". In: *Interfaces* 4.3, pp. 28–36.

Gallie, W. B. (2001). "Narrative and historical understanding". In: *The History and Narrative Reader*. Ed. by G. Roberts. London, United Kingdom: Routledge, pp. 40–51.

Gardner, W. L. and B. J. Avolio (1998). "The charismatic relationship: A dramaturgical perspective". In: *Academy of Management Review* 23.1, pp. 32–58.

Garfinkel, H. (1967). *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Gioia, D. A. (2006). "On Weick: An appreciation". In: *Organization Studies* 27.11, pp. 1709–1721.

Gioia, D. A. and J. Thomas (1996). "Identity, image and issue interpretation: Sensemaking during strategic change in academia". In: *Administrative Science Quarterly* 41, pp. 370–403.

Goffman, E. (1949). "The presentation of self in everyday life". In: *American Journal of Sociology* 55, pp. 6–7.

— (1974). *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Gold, J. (1997). "Learning and story-telling: the next stage in the journey for the learning organization". In: *Journal of Workplace Learning* 9, pp. 133–145.

Golden-Biddle, K. and H. Rao (1997). "Breaches in the boardroom: organizational identity and conflicts of commitment in a nonprofit organization". In: *Organization Science* 8, pp. 593–611.

Goldenstein, J., S. G. M. Händschke, and P. Walgenbach (2015). "The cognitive grounding of institutions and words in new institutionalism". In: *Academy of Management Proceedings*. Vol. 2015. 1. Academy of Management, p. 10879.

Goldstein, E. B. (2010). *Encyclopedia of Perception*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Gopinath, C. and A. Prasad (2012). "Toward a critical framework for understanding MNE operations: Revisiting Coca-Cola's exit from India". In: *Organization* 20, pp. 212–232.

Griggs, R. A. and G. I. Whitehead (2015). "Coverage of recent criticisms of Milgram's obedience experiments in introductory social psychology textbooks". In: *Theory and Psychology* 25.5, pp. 564–580.

Grondin, J. (2002). "Gadamer's basic understanding of understanding". In: *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*. Ed. by R. J. Dostal. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, pp. 36–51.

Hall, S. (1985). "Signification, representation, ideology: Althusser and the post-structuralist debates". In: *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 2, pp. 91–114.

Hannan, M. T. and J. Freeman (1977). "The population ecology of organizations". In: *American Journal of Sociology* 82.5, pp. 929–964.

Harmon-Jones, E. and C. Harmon-Jones (Jan. 2007). "Cognitive Dissonance Theory After 50 Years of Development". In: *Zeitschrift für Sozialpsychologie* 38.1, pp. 7–16.

Hatch, M. J. and M. Schultz (1997). "Relations between organizational culture, identity and image". In: *European Journal of Marketing* 31.5/6, pp. 356–365.

Hedberg, B. L. T., P. C. Nystrom, and W. H. Starbuck (1976). "Camping on seesaws: prescriptions for a self-designing organization". In: *Administrative Science Quarterly* 21, pp. 41–65.

Heidegger, M. (1988). "Understanding and Interpretation". In: *Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present*. Ed. by K. Mueller-Vollmer. New York, NY: Continuum, pp. 221–228.

Hekman, S. J. (1986). *Hermeneutics and the Sociology of Knowledge*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Polity Press.

Henshel, R. L. (Sept. 1987). "Credibility and confidence feedback loops in social prediction". In: *Paper presented at the Plenary Session of the 7th International Congress of Cybernetics and Systems*. University of London.

Hirsch, E. D. (1967). *Validity in Interpretation*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Howard, R. J. (1982). *Three Faces of Hermeneutics: An Introduction to Current Theories of Understanding*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Hoy, D. C. (1982). *The critical circle: Literature, history, and philosophical hermeneutics*. Berkeley, CA: Univ of California Press.

Huber, G. P. and R. L. Daft (1987). "The information environment of organizations". In: *Handbook of Organizational Communication*. Ed. by F. M. Jablin et al. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, pp. 130–164.

Humphreys, M. and A. D. Brown (2002). "Narratives of organizational identity and identification: a case study of hegemony and resistance". In: *Organization Studies* 23, pp. 421–447.

Immergut, E. M. (1997). "The normative roots of the new institutionalism: historical institutionalism and comparative policy studies". In: *Theorieentwicklung in der Politikwissenschaft: eine Zwischenbilanz*. Ed. by A. Benz and W. Seibel. Baden-Baden, Germany: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, pp. 325–355.

Islam, G. (2014). "Identities and ideals: Psychoanalytic dialogues of self and leadership". In: *Leadership* 10.3, pp. 344–360.

Jameson, Fredric (1976). "On Goffman's Frame Analysis". In: *Theory and Society* 3.1, pp. 119–133.

Jennings, P. D. and R. Greenwood (2003). "Constructing the iron cage: Institutional theory and enactment". In: *Debating Organization: Point-Counterpoint in Organization Studies*. Ed. by R. Westwood and S. Clegg. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 195–206.

Jones, C. and A. Spicer (2005). "The sublime object of entrepreneurship". In: *Organization* 12.2, pp. 223–246.

Jones, C. and E. H. Volpe (2011). "Organizational identification: Extending our understanding of social identities through social networks". In: *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 32.3, pp. 413–434.

Jordan, A. (1996). "Critical incident story creation and culture formation in a self-directed work team". In: *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 9.5, pp. 27–35.

Kalberg, S. (1980). "Max Weber's types of rationality: Cornerstones for the analysis of rationalization processes in history". In: *American Journal of Sociology* 85.5, pp. 1145–1179.

Kaye, M. (1995). "Organisational myths as storytelling as communication management: a conceptual framework for learning as organisation's culture". In: *Journal of the Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management* 1, pp. 1–13.

Keane, N. and C. Lawn, eds. (2016). *The Blackwell Companion to Hermeneutics*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Kearney, R., ed. (1994). *Twentieth-Century Continental Philosophy*. Vol. 8. London, United Kingdom: Routledge.

— (2006). "Parsing narrative: story, history, life". In: *Human Studies* 29.4, pp. 477–490.

Kelley, H. H. (1968). "Interpersonal accommodation." In: *American Psychologist* 23.6, pp. 399–410.

Kelley, H. H. et al. (1962). "The development of cooperation in the 'minimal social situation'". In: *Psychological Monographs* 76.19.

Kelly, J. W. (1985). "Storytelling in high tech organizations: a medium for sharing culture". In: *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 13, pp. 45–58.

Kets de Vries, M. F. R. and D. Miller (1987). "Interpreting organizational texts". In: *Journal of Management Studies* 24, pp. 233–247.

Kiesler, C. A. (1971). *The psychology of commitment*. New York, NY: Academic Press.

Kilduff, M. and A. Mehra (1997). "Postmodernism and organizational research". In: *The Academy of Management Review* 22.2, pp. 453–481.

Knights, D. (2002). "Writing organizational analysis into Foucault". In: *Organization* 9.4, pp. 575–593.

Knights, D. and H. Willmott (1989). "Power and subjectivity at work: From degradation to subjugation in social relations". In: *Sociology* 23.4, pp. 535–558.

Kunda, G. (1992). *Engineering Culture: Control and Commitment in a High-Tech Corporation*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.

Labov, W. and J. Waletzky (1967). "Narrative analysis: Oral versions of personal experience". In: *Essays on the Verbal and Visual Arts*. Ed. by J. Helm. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, pp. 12–44.

Langenberg, S. and H. Wesseling (2016). "Making Sense of Weick's Organising: A Philosophical Exploration". In: *Philosophy of Management* 15.3, pp. 221–240.

Lanzara, G. F. (1983). "Ephemeral organizations in extreme environments: emergence, strategy, extinction". In: *Journal of Management Studies* 20.1, pp. 71–95.

Lecoure, J. S. and A. J. Mills (2008). "Dialogical aspects of the technologies of the self in organizational analysis". In: *Tamara Journal of Critical Organisation Inquiry* 7.1/2, pp. 7–20.

Lee, A. S. (1994). "Electronic mail as a medium for rich communication: an empirical investigation using hermeneutic interpretation". In: *MIS Quarterly* 18.2, pp. 143–157.

Levitt, B. and J. G. March (1988). "Organizational learning". In: *Annual Review of Sociology* 14, pp. 319–340.

Lieblich, A., R. Tuval-Mashiach, and T. Zilber (1998). *Narrative Research: Reading, Analysis and Interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Llewellyn, N. and R. Burrow (2007). "Negotiating identities of consumption: Insights from conversation analysis". In: *Exploring Identity: Concepts and Methods*, pp. 302–315.

Louis, M. R. and R. I. Sutton (1991). "Switching cognitive gears: from habits of mind to active thinking". In: *Human Relations* 44.1, pp. 55–76.

Lucius-Hoene, G. and A. Deppermann (2004). *Rekonstruktion narrativer Identität: Ein Arbeitsbuch zur Analyse narrativer Interviews*. Weisbaden, Germany: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, Springer Fachmedien.

Lueger, M. et al. (2005). "Contextualizing influence activities: An objective hermeneutical approach". In: *Organization Studies* 26, pp. 1145–1168.

MacIntyre, A. (2007). *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

Madison, G. B. (1988). *The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

— (1994). "Hermeneutics: Gadamer and Ricoeur". In: *Twentieth-Century Continental Philosophy, Routledge History of Philosophy, Volume VIII*. Ed. by R. Kearney. London, United Kingdom: Routledge, pp. 290–349.

Magala, S. J. (1997). "Book review essay: Karl E. Weick, Sensemaking in Organizations. 1995, London: SAGE Publications. 231 pages". In: *Organization Studies* 18.2, pp. 317–338.

Mailloux, S. (1990). *Interpretation*. Ed. by F. Lentricchia and T. McLaughlin. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, pp. 121–121.

Maines, D. R. (2000). "The social construction of meaning". In: *Contemporary Sociology* 29.4, pp. 577–577.

Maitlis, S. and M. Christianson (2014). "Sensemaking in organizations: taking stock and moving forward". In: *The Academy of Management Annals* 8.1, pp. 57–125.

March, J. G. and J. P. Olsen (1984). "The new institutionalism: organizational factors in political life". In: *The American Political Science Review* 78.3, pp. 734–749.

Martin, B. and J. Wajcman (2004). "Markets, contingency and preferences: contemporary managers' narrative identities". In: *Sociological Review* 52.2, pp. 240–264.

Martin, J. (1982). "Stories and scripts in organizational settings". In: *Cognitive Social Psychology*. Ed. by A. H. Hastorf and A. M. Isen. New York, NY: Elsevier, pp. 155–305.

Maslow, A. H. (1943). "A theory of human motivation". In: *Psychological Review* 50.4, pp. 370–396.

McAdams, D. P. (1985). *Power, Intimacy, and the Life Story: Personological Inquiries into Identity*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

— (1993). *Stories We Live By: Personal Myths and the Making of the Self*. New York, NY: Morrow.

— (2001). "The psychology of life stories." In: *Review of General Psychology* 5.2, p. 100.

McAdams, D. P. and K. C. McLean (2013). "Narrative identity". In: *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 22.3, pp. 233–238.

McConkie, M. L. and R. B. Wayne (1986). "Organizational stories: one means of moving the informal organization during change efforts". In: *Public Administration Quarterly* 10, pp. 189–205.

Mcinnes, P. and S. Corlett (2012). "Conversational identity work in everyday interaction". In: *Scandinavian Journal of Management* 28.1, pp. 27–38.

Mead, G. H. (1934a). "The 'I' and the 'me'". In: *Mind, Self and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*. Ed. by C. W. Morris. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, pp. 173–178.

— (1934b). "The Self and the Organism". In: *Mind, Self and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*. Ed. by C. W. Morris. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, pp. 135–144.

Meindl, J. R., C. Stubbart, and J. F. Porac, eds. (1996). *Cognition Within and Between Organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Meyer, J. C. (1995). "Tell me a story: eliciting organizational values from narratives". In: *Communication Quarterly* 43, pp. 210–224.

Mills, J. H., A. Thurlow, and A. J. Mills (2010). "Making sense of sensemaking: the critical sensemaking approach". In: *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management* 5.2, pp. 182–195.

Mitroff, I. I. (1975). "Stories managers tell: a new tool for organizational problem solving". In: *Management Review* July, pp. 18–22.

Mitroff, I. I. and R. H. Kilmann (1976). "On organizational stories: an approach to the design and analysis of organizations through myths and stories". In: *The Management of Organizational Design*. Ed. by R. H. Kilmann, L. R. Pondy, and D. P. Slevin. New York, NY: North-Holland, pp. 189–207.

Morgan, G. (1980). "Paradigms, metaphors, and puzzle solving in organization theory". In: *Administrative Science Quarterly* 25.4, pp. 605–622.

— (2006). *Images of Organization*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Morgan, G. et al. (2010). *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Institutional Analysis*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.

Moscovici, S. (1980). "Toward a theory of conversion behavior". In: *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*. Ed. by L. Berkowitz. Vol. 13. New York, NY: Academic Press, pp. 209–239.

Mumby, D. K. (1987). "The political function of narrative in organizations". In: *Communication Monographs* 54, pp. 113–127.

Mumby, D. K. and C. Stohl (1991). "Power and discourse in organization studies: absence and dialectic of control". In: *Discourse and Society* 2, pp. 313–332.

Myers, M. D. (1994). "A disaster for everyone to see: an interpretive analysis of a failed IS project". In: *Accounting, Management and Information Technologies* 4.4, pp. 185–201.

— (2004). "Hermeneutics in information systems research". In: *Social Theory and Philosophy for Information Systems*. Ed. by J. Mingers and L. P. Willcocks. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, pp. 103–128.

Myrsiades, L. S. (1987). "Corporate stories as cultural communication in the organization setting". In: *Management Communication Quarterly* 1, pp. 84–120.

Nail, P. R. (1986). "Toward an integration of some models and theories of social response". In: *Psychological Bulletin* 100, pp. 190–206.

Nemeth, C. J. (1986). "Differential contributions of majority and minority influence". In: *Psychological Review* 93, pp. 23–32.

Ng, W. and C. De Cock (2002). "Battle in the boardroom: a discursive perspective". In: *Journal of Management Studies* 39, pp. 23–49.

Nietzsche, F. (1921). *The Genealogy of Morals*. New York, NY: Boni and Liveright Publishers.

Olafson, Frederick A. (1986). "Hermeneutics: "Analytical" and "Dialectical"". In: *History and Theory* 25.4, pp. 28–42.

Orihara, H. (2008). "Max Weber's 'four-stage rationalization-scale of social action and order' in the 'categories' and its significance to the 'old manuscript' of his 'Economy and Society': A positive critique of Wolfgang Schluchter". In: *Max Weber Studies* 8.2, pp. 141–162.

Palmer, R. (1969). *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Parfit, D. (1986). *Reasons and Persons*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.

Patriotta, G. (2003). "Sensemaking on the shop floor: narratives of knowledge in organizations". In: *Journal of Management Studies* 40.2, pp. 349–375.

Pedersen, A. R. (2008). "Narrative identity work in a medical ward: A study of diversity in health care identities". In: *Tamara Journal of Critical Organisation Inquiry* 7.1/2, pp. 38–53.

Perrow, C. (1983). "The organizational context of human factors engineering". In: *Administrative Science Quarterly* 28.4, pp. 521–541.

Peters, T.J. and R. H. Waterman (1982). *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best-Run Companies*. New York, NY: Harper and Row.

Pfeffer, J. and G. R. Salancik (1974). "Organizational Decision Making as a Political Process: The Case of a University Budget". In: *Administrative Science Quarterly* 19.2, pp. 135–151.

Phillips, N. and J. L. Brown (1993). "Analyzing communication in and around organizations: A critical hermeneutic approach". In: *The Academy of Management Journal* 36.6, pp. 1547–1576.

Piercey, R. (2016). "Paul Ricoeur". In: *The Blackwell Companion to Hermeneutics*. Ed. by N. Keane and C. Lawn. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 412–416.

Porac, J. E., H. Thomas, and C. Baden-Fuller (1989). "Competitive groups as cognitive communities: The case of Scottish knitwear manufacturers". In: *Journal of Management Studies* 26.4, pp. 397–416.

Prasad, A. and R. Mir (2002a). "Digging deep for meaning: A critical hermeneutic analysis of CEO letters to shareholders in the oil industry". In: *Journal of Business Communication* 39, pp. 92–116.

— (2002b). "The contest over meaning: Hermeneutics as an interpretive methodology for understanding texts". In: *Organizational Research Methods* 5, pp. 12–33.

Pratt, M.G. and P.O. Foreman (2000). "Classifying managerial responses to multiple organizational identities". In: *Academy of Management Review* 25.1, pp. 18–42.

Propp, V. (1927). *Morphology of the Folktale*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Rabinowitz, L., H. H. Kelley, and R. M. Rosenblatt (1966). "Effects of different types of interdependence and response conditions in the minimal social situation". In: *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 2, pp. 169–197.

Raffnsøe, S., A. Mennicken, and P. Miller (2017). "The Foucault Effect in Organization Studies". In: *Organization Studies* 0.0, pp. 1–28.

Rao, M. V. H. and W. A. Pasmore (1989). "Knowledge and interests in organization studies: A conflict of interpretations". In: *Organization Studies* 10, pp. 225–239.

Rhodes, C. (1997). "The legitimation of learning in organizational change". In: *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 10, pp. 10–20.

— (2000). "Reading and writing organizational lives". In: *Organization* 7, pp. 7–29.

Rhodes, C. and A. D. Brown (2005). "Narrative, organizations and research". In: *International Journal of Management Reviews* 7.3, pp. 167–188.

Ricoeur, P. (1967). *The Symbolism of Evil*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

— (1971). "The model of the text: meaningful action considered as a text". In: *Social Research* 38.3, pp. 529–562.

— (1973a). "The hermeneutical function of distanciation". In: *Philosophy Today* 17.2, pp. 129–141.

— (1973b). "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text". In: *New Literary History* 5.1, pp. 91–117.

— (1973c). "The task of hermeneutics". In: *Philosophy Today* 17.2, pp. 112–128.

— (1974a). "Existence and Hermeneutics". In: *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*. Ed. by D. Carr. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

— (1974b). "Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics". In: *New Literary History* 6.1, pp. 95–110.

— (1975). "Phenomenology and Hermeneutics". In: *NouÌ s* 9.1, pp. 85–102.

— (1978). "The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling". In: *Critical Inquiry* 5.1, pp. 143–159.

— (1980). "Narrative Time". In: *Critical Inquiry* 7.1, pp. 169–190.

— (1981). "What is a text? Explanation and understanding". In: *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*. Ed. by J. B. Thompson. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, pp. 145–164.

— (1984a). "From Proclamation to Narrative". In: *The Journal of Religion* 64.4, pp. 501–512.

— (1984b). *Time and Narrative, Volume 1*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

— (1985). *Time and Narrative, Volume 2*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

— (1988). *Time and Narrative, Volume 3*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

From text to action: Essays in hermeneutics II, trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson (1991a). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Ricoeur, P. (1991b). "Narrative identity". In: *Philosophy Today* 35.1, pp. 73–81.

— (1992). *Oneself as Another*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

— (2003). *The Rule of Metaphor*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Riessman, K. (1993). *Narrative Analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Roberts, J. (2005). "The power of the 'imaginary' in disciplinary processes". In: *Organization* 12.5, pp. 619–642.

Robinson, I. A. and L. Hawpe (1986). "Narrative thinking as a heuristic process". In: *Narrative Psychology*. Ed. by T. R. Sarbin. New York, NY: Praeger, pp. 111–125.

Robinson, J. A. (1981). "Personal narratives reconsidered". In: *The Journal of American Folklore* 94.371, pp. 58–85.

Robinson, S. K. and R. Kerr (2009). "The symbolic violence of leadership: A critical hermeneutic study of leadership and succession in a British organization in the post-Soviet context". In: *Human Relations* 62, pp. 875–903.

Roethlisberg, F.J. and W.J. Dickson (1939). *Management and the Worker*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Rorty, R. (1989). *Contingency, irony, and solidarity*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

Rosenthal, R. and L. Jacobson (1968). *Pygmalion in the Classroom*. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Rowlinson, M. and C. Carter (2002). "Foucault and History in Organization Studies". In: *Organization* 9.4, pp. 527–547.

Schön, D. A. (1983). *The Reflective Practitioner*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Schutz, A. (1967). *The Phenomenology of the Social World*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Schutz, A. and T. Luckmann (1974). *The Structures of the Life-World*. London, United Kingdom: Heinemann.

Collected Papers I. The Problem of Social Reality (Phaenomenologica) (1972). Heidelberg, Germany: Springer.

Schwandt, T. A. (1998). "Constructivist, interpretivist approaches to human inquiry". In: *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues*. Ed. by N. K. Denzin and I. S. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, pp. 221–259.

Schwartz, H. (1990). *Narcissistic Emotion and Corporate Decay: The Theory of the Organizational Ideal*. New York, NY: New York University Press.

Schwartzman, H.B. (1987). "The significance of meetings in an American mental health center". In: *American Ethnologist* 14, pp. 271–294.

— (1989). *The Meeting: Gatherings in Organizations and Communities*. New York, NY: Plenum.

Scott, W. R. (2008). "Approaching adulthood: the maturing of institutional theory". In: *Theory and Society* 37.5, pp. 427–443.

Searle, J. R. (1995). *The Construction of Social Reality*. London, England: Penguin Books.

Selznick, P. (1996). "Institutionalism "old" and "new"". In: *Administrative Science Quarterly* 41.2, pp. 270–277.

Simon, H. A. (1962). "The architecture of complexity". In: *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*. Vol. 106. 6, pp. 467–482.

— (1973). "Applying information technology to organization design". In: *Public Administration Review* 33.3, pp. 268–278.

Skøldberg, K. (1994). "Tales of change: public administration, reform and narrative mode". In: *Organization Science* 5, pp. 219–238.

Smith, F. L. and J. Keyton (2001). "Organizational storytelling: metaphors for relational power and identity struggles". In: *Management Communication Quarterly* 15, pp. 149–182.

Snow, D. A. et al. (1986). "Frame alignment processes, micromobilization, and movement participation". In: *American Sociological Review*, pp. 464–481.

Snowden, Dave (2003). "Complex acts of knowing: Paradox and descriptive self-awareness". In: *Bulletin of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 29.4, pp. 23–28.

Snyder, M. (1992). "Motivational foundations of behavioral confirmation". In: *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*. Ed. by M. Zanna. Vol. 25. San Diego, CA: Academic Press, pp. 67–114.

Somers, M. R. (1994). "The narrative constitution of identity: A relational and network approach". In: *Theory and Society* 23.5, pp. 605–649.

Soulier, Eddie and Jean Caussanel (2002). "Narrative tools to improve collaborative sense-making". In: *Workshop on Meaning Negotiation, held in conjunction with Eighteenth National Conference on Artificial Intelligence-AAAI'02, 28 July*.

Sparrowe, R. T. (2005). "Authentic leadership and the narrative self". In: *The Leadership Quarterly* 16, pp. 419–439.

Staw, B. M. (1982). "Counterforces to change". In: *Change in Organizations; New Perspectives on Theory, Research, and Practice*. Ed. by P. S. Goodman & Associates. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, pp. 87–121.

Steele, C. M. (1988). "The psychology of self-affirmation: Sustaining the integrity of the self". In: *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*. Vol. 21. Elsevier, pp. 261–302.

Stevenson, W. B. and D. N. Greenberg (1998). "The formal analysis of narratives of organizational change". In: *Journal of Management* 24, pp. 741–762.

Suddaby, R., W. Foster, and A. J. Mills (2014). "Historical institutionalism". In: *Organizations in Time: History, Theory, Methods*. Ed. by M. Bucheli and R. D. Wadhwani. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, pp. 100–123.

Tajfel, H. (1982). "Social psychology of intergroup relations". In: *Annual Review of Psychology* 33, pp. 1–39.

Tajfel, H. and J. C. Turner (1979). "An integrative theory of intergroup conflict". In: *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*. Ed. by W. G. Austin and S. Worchel. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole, pp. 33–37.

Taylor, C. (2002). "Gadamer on the human sciences". In: *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*. Ed. by R. J. Dostal. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, pp. 126–142.

Taylor, F. W. (2007). *The Principles of Scientific Management*. Sioux Falls, SD: NuVision Publications.

Taylor, S. S., D. Fisher, and R. L. Dufresne (2002). "The aesthetics of management storytelling: a key to organizational learning". In: *Management Learning* 33, pp. 313–321.

Tenkasi, R. and R. Boland (1993). "Locating meaning making in organizational learning: the narrative basis of cognition". In: *Research on Organizational Change and Development*. Ed. by R. Woodman and W. Pasmore. Greenwich, CT: JAI, pp. 77–103.

Thayer, L. (1988). "Leadership/communication: A critical review and a modest proposal". In: *Handbook of Organizational Communication*. Ed. by G. M. Goldhaber and G. A. Barnett. Norwood, NJ: Ablex, pp. 231–263.

Thompson, J. B. (1981). *Critical Hermeneutics: A Study in the Thought of Paul Ricoeur and Jurgen Habermas*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

Todorov, T. and A. Weinstein (1969). "Structural Analysis of Narrative". In: *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 3.1, pp. 70–76.

Tomkins, L. and V. Eatough (2017). "Hermeneutics: Interpretation, understanding and sense-making". In: *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Business and Management Research Methods: History and Traditions*. Ed. by C. Cassell, A. L. Cunliffe, and G. Grandy. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, pp. 185–200.

Upton, A. (1961). *Design for Thinking*. Palo Alto, CA: Pacific.

Vaara, E. (2002). "On the discursive construction of success/failure in narrative of post-merger integration". In: *Organization Studies* 23, pp. 211–248.

Van Maanen, J. (1995). "Style as theory". In: *Organization Science* 6.1, pp. 133–143.

Villadsen, Kaspar (2007). "Managing the employee's soul: Foucault applied to modern management technologies". In: *Cadernos EBAPE.BR* 5.1, pp. 01–10.

Wagner-Tsukamoto, S. (2007). "An institutional economic reconstruction of scientific management: On the lost theoretical logic of Taylorism". In: *Academy of Management Review* 32.1, pp. 105–117.

Wallace, A. F. C. (1961). *Culture and Personality*. New York, NY: Random House.

Wallemacq, A. and D. Sims (1998). "The struggle with sense". In: *Discourse and Organization*. Ed. by D. Gran, T. Keenoy, and C. Oswick. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Walsham, G. (1995). "The emergence of interpretivism in IS research". In: *Information Systems Research* 6, pp. 376–394.

Weber, K. and M. A. Glynn (2006). "Making Sense with Institutions: Context, Thought and Action in Karl Weick's Theory". In: *Organization Studies* 27.11, pp. 1639–1660.

Weber, M. (1946). *From Max Weber*. Ed. by H. Gerth and C. W. Mills. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.

— (1968). *Economy and Society*. Ed. by G. Roth and C. Wittich. New York, NY: Bedminster Press.

Weick, K. E. (1979). *The Social Psychology of Organizing*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

— (1993). "Sensemaking in organizations: Small structures with large consequences". In: *Social Psychology in Organizations: Advances in Theory and Research*. Ed. by J. K. Murnighan. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, pp. 10–37.

— (1995). *Sensemaking in Organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

— (2003). "Enacting an environment: The infrastructure of organizing". In: *Debating organization: Point-Counterpoint in Organization Studies*. Ed. by Robert Westwood and Stewart Clegg. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 184–194.

Weick, K. E. and L. Browning (1986). "Arguments and narration in organizational communication". In: *Journal of Management* 12, pp. 243–259.

Weick, K. E., K. M. Sutcliffe, and D. Obstfeld (2005). "Organizing and the process of sensemaking". In: *Organization Science* 16.4, pp. 409–421.

Whetten, D.A. (2006). "Albert and Whetten revisited: Strengthening the concept of organizational identity". In: *Journal of Management Inquiry* 15.3, pp. 219–234.

White, J. D. (2009). "The hermeneutics of government contracting". In: *Administrative Theory & Praxis* 31, pp. 302–321.

Wiley, N. (1988). "The micro-macro problem in social theory". In: *Sociological Theory* 6.2, pp. 254–261.

Wilkins, A. (1984). "The creation of company cultures: the role of stories and human resource systems". In: *Human Resource Management* 23, pp. 41–60.

Wilkins, A. L. (1983). "Organizational stories as symbols which control the organization". In: *Organizational Symbolism*. Ed. by L.R Pondy et al. Greenwich, CT: JAI, pp. 81–92.

Williamson, O. E. (1981). "The economics of organization: The transaction cost approach". In: *American Journal of Sociology* 87.3, pp. 548–577.

Winograd, T. and F. Flores (1986). *Understanding Computers and Cognition: A New Foundation for Design*. Norwood, NJ: Intellect Books.

Wood, W. et al. (1994). "Minority influence: A meta-analytic review of social influence processes". In: *Psychological Bulletin* 115, pp. 323–345.

Zuboff, S. (1988). *In the Age of the Smart Machine: The Future of Work and Power*. New York, NY: Basic Books.